

[illegible]

Israel's high court orders report on interrogation of Hamas suspect

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel's high court ordered police on Sunday to provide details of methods used to interrogate the detained relative of an Islamist activist who is one of Israel's most wanted men, the suspect's lawyer said.

Police have been interrogating Fawad Koran since Dec. 10 in a bid to track down Adel Awadallah, who Israel suspects of building the bombs used in a series of suicide attacks this summer in Jerusalem by the Islamist group Hamas, attorney Allegra Pacheco said.

Mr. Koran, who is being held in the interrogation centre of Jerusalem's Russ-

ian Compound police station, is Mr. Awadallah's brother-in-law.

Ms. Pacheco, representing the Public Council Against Torture, complained to the supreme court that police had prevented her from seeing her client and accused interrogators of torturing the suspect.

On Sunday the court ordered the Shin Beth secret service to submit by Tuesday a report detailing exactly how Mr. Koran had been treated during his 18 days in custody.

The report should include how many hours he has been deprived of sleep, tied in painful positions and

subjected to loud music or shaking," Ms. Pacheco told AFP.

She also demanded that Shin Beth officials explain why Mr. Koran has been detained and why he is being intensively interrogated.

At a hearing on Friday, investigators denied torturing Mr. Koran but admitted that he had been tied to a small chair during questioning and said a doctor who examined him gave him a pain-killer, the Maariv newspaper reported Sunday.

Mr. Koran is an economics major at Bir Zeit university outside Ramallah.

Israeli security services

claim Mr. Awadallah, an engineering student from Ramallah, manufactured the bombs used by five members of Hamas who blew themselves up in two separate attacks in Jerusalem in July and September.

The attacks killed 21 Israelis plus the bombers. Police have said they believe Mr. Awadallah is hiding out in West Bank towns under the control of the Palestinian National Authority.

The interrogation of Mr. Koran has coincided with a police alert over possible new attacks on Jerusalem by Islamists opposed to peace with Israel.



FATEH ANNIVERSARY: Masked Palestinians from President Yasser Arafat's Fateh movement march in the West Bank town of Jenin on Sunday to mark the 32nd anniversary of 'Fateh Day.' The anniversary falls on Jan. 1, but because of the Holy Month of Ramadan the movement brought forward the celebrations (Reuters photo)

Three jailed for life in Kuwaiti MP murder bid

KUWAIT (R) — A Kuwaiti criminal court Sunday sentenced three people to life imprisonment after finding them guilty of trying to kill a member of parliament and his wife in June.

The official news agency KUNA said Salman Al Shammari, a Kuwaiti national, Sayed Mohammad Ardabili and Sayed Abdul-Hadi Ardabili, both Iranian nationals, received life sentences.

The court also found Adel Mohammad Al Mchaimi, a Kuwaiti national, guilty of being an accessory to the assassination attempt and sentenced him to 10 years in jail.

A fifth suspect, Abdul-Muhsen Al Rouni, a Kuwaiti national, was found not guilty. On June 6, Abdullah Al Naibari and his wife were shot and wounded while driving from their beach house to Kuwait City, Mr. Naibari was hit in the jaw and chest while his wife was slightly

wounded.

Mr. Naibari told a news conference in October the attempt on his life was motivated by his probes into alleged irregularities in defence ministry catering contracts.

Mr. Naibari played a key role in parliamentary efforts to combat what the opposition described as graft and mismanagement of state funds. He was also among leaders of a movement which successfully demanded the restoration of parliament, dissolved in 1986.

Kuwait, which controls about 10 per cent of the world's proven oil reserves, is the only Gulf Arab state with an elected parliament.

General elections were held in 1992, more than a year after a U.S.-led military coalition ended Iraq's seven-month occupation of Kuwait.

Kuwait's finance minister submits resignation

KUWAIT (AP) — Nasser Al Rowdhan, finance minister since shortly after the 1991 liberation of Kuwait from Iraqi occupation, has submitted his resignation, Al Anba daily reported Sunday.

The minister, who also serves as deputy prime minister, told the pro-government newspaper he had given his resignation in writing to the prime minister, Sheikh Saad Al Abdullah Al Sabah, on Nov. 15.

There has been no announcement on whether the cabinet has accepted it. The cabinet was to meet later Sunday.

Mr. Rowdhan did not tell the newspaper why he wanted to quit, but there have

been press reports that a group of parliament members was preparing to question him about the alleged loss of some \$933.33 million in government investments related to the country's social security program.

If it takes place, the questioning would be the second for Mr. Rowdhan. In July, he underwent 12 hours of questioning before the 50-seat house about allegations of widespread financial and administrative mismanagement in his ministry.

Mr. Rowdhan told the daily he hoped his resignation would be accepted so that he could end his term with a "clean and spotless" record.

Iraq urges U.N. to prevent military strikes

BAGHDAD (R) — The Iraqi press Sunday urged the U.N. Security Council to prevent the United States from carrying out air strikes at sites declared out of bounds to U.N. weapons inspectors.

Iraqi leaders Friday accused the U.S. of planning military strikes which would plant fake chemical or germ warfare evidence at the facilities, a charge the White House dismissed as "ridiculous."

"The world community should warn America against committing such a crime and the Security Council should shoulder its responsibility on such a serious issue," said a Sunday front-page editorial in the Iraqi daily, Al Thawra.

Iraq has banned the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM), which is in charge of dismantling the country's weapons of mass destruction, from investigating "presidential sites." Baghdad has said no weapons are hidden at those locations.

The U.S. has repeatedly insisted that Iraq allow the inspectors access to the sites and has pointedly refused to rule out the use of force if Iraq does not comply with the U.N. inspections

regime. The Iraqi government newspaper Al Jumhuriya Sunday urged Security Council members to "find a quick solution to the problem of presidential headquarters, which was created by America."

"France... Russia and China should not only prevent such a thing from happening, but evade the excuses used by America to launch [strikes against these sites]," the paper said.

It repeated an earlier Iraqi invitation to member states of the Security Council and of UNSCOM to send experts to inspect the facilities.

A White House spokesman Friday dismissed Iraq's accusation that the U.S. planned to drop bombs laced with biological or chemical agents on presidential sites.

"We term this ridiculous," the spokesman said. "We do not have these weapons in our operational inventory."

Asked if the United States was planning to bomb Iraqi sites with conventional weapons, without any chemical or biological component, he said he would have "no comment on that."

Jordanian of Palestinian origin denies selling lands in Jerusalem to Jews

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A Jordanian of Palestinian origin on Sunday denied Palestine National Authority (PNA) accusations that he was selling land to Jews in Arab east Jerusalem — a crime punishable by death.

Mustafa Issawi also denied a newspaper report by the Jerusalem-based newspaper that the PNA had demanded Jordan to hand him over for trial and that he was about to conclude a deal to sell 60 dunums of land in the Holy City.

"These are false and baseless accusations," he told the Jordan Times. "They have no documents

to prove what they have published. If the newspaper does not retract what has been published, I will sue them before Israeli courts."

Al Quds newspaper reported earlier this month that the PNA pressed for Mr. Issawi's extradition to try him as part of efforts to stop Palestinians from selling land to Israel to house new settlements.

The PNA, which took over the Gaza Strip and part of the West Bank under a 1994 peace deal, tightened penalties against Palestinians who sell land to Israelis, a move that drew condemnation from human rights groups. Last year, several Palestinians suspected of selling lands to Israelis were found dead in the

Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The PNA denied any involvement in the killings.

Mr. Issawi was sentenced to death by a Jordanian court in the 1980s on charges of selling land in Arab east Jerusalem. The court later acquitted him.

Jordan ruled Arab east Jerusalem and the West Bank from 1950 until losing them to Israel in the 1967 Middle East War. However, it continued to run the day-to-day affairs of Palestinians until severing links with the occupied territories in 1988, but many Jordanian laws are still applied.

Palestinian ambassador to Jordan Omar Khatib said the PNA had not submitted an "official" request to Jordan to hand over Mr.

Issawi. "But we have made some unofficial contacts with Jordan in this regard," he said.

"The Jordanian government received guarantees from him that he will not sell any piece of land to the Israelis," Mr. Khatib told the Jordan Times. "But despite these assurances, we still have doubts that something is happening..." he said.

"We have documents that he is still cooperating with Jewish brokers [to sell land] but so far, nothing has been done..." Mr. Khatib added. He said that Mr. Issawi had sent a message to the PNA claiming he was innocent and that he did not sell land to Israelis.

Algerian authorities launch security crackdown ahead of Ramadan

ALGIERS (AP) — Algerian authorities launched a security crackdown Sunday aimed at preventing attacks ahead of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan.

Ramadan in Algeria in recent years has been marked by an upsurge of violence usually attributed to Islamists who are trying to overthrow the military-backed government and establish a state based on the Koran.

Citizens are being warned to stay away

from garbage cans and abandoned vehicles as well as to alert police of any suspicious object or person.

The number of roadblocks around towns and cities have been increased as well as the number of patrols in crowded neighbourhoods and roads leading into urban areas.

The old city of the capital Algiers is surrounded by anti-terrorist squads and checks of identity papers as well as vehicle

inspections have been stepped up. Security is also heavy around public buildings and state enterprises.

Parking restrictions in place as part of the security campaign pose a serious problem for car owners in Algiers.

Television, radio and newspapers of all political tendencies are taking part in the campaign by diffusing information on the security measures.

Posters remind citizens that "vigilance is the best

way of ensuring everybody's safety."

According to leaflets distributed in the old city of Algiers, a group belonging to the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) are ready for action during Ramadan.

The GIA has been blamed for many of the attacks that have claimed some 75,000 lives since an Islamist insurgency began in 1992 after the government cancelled legislative elections the now banned Islamic Sal-

vation Front was poised to win.

Meanwhile, the violence has continued in Algeria.

An armed group on Friday slit the throats of 21 people in Ouled Moussa, a town about 100 kilometres south of Algiers.

In another attack, seven schoolchildren on vacation at Sidi Semiane, about 100 kilometres west of Algiers, were kidnapped and they remained missing Sunday afternoon.

More than 100 civilians were killed last week in massacres.

Hospital sources, who refused to be identified by name for fear of reprisals, said 14 alleged members of the GIA were killed Friday by government security forces in Djebel Bouzegza about 150 kilometres east of Algiers. Three others died Thursday and three more Saturday in other security operations.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 73111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

14:10...A Show With the Mouse
14:30...Hammerman
15:00...Gillette Sports Special
15:15...Riding High
15:30...Animal Show
16:10...Oliver Twist
16:30...Neighbours
17:00...French Programmes
19:00...News in French
19:15...French programme
19:30...News Headline
19:35...Comedy — Murphy Brown
20:00...The Health Show
20:30...Babylon-5
21:10...Highlanders
22:00...News in English
22:30...Emergency Room
23:10...Cosmos

PRAYER TIMES

05:08...Fajr
06:30...Sunrise/Duha
11:38...Dhuhr
14:22...Asr
16:45...Maghrib
18:07...Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
632785.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation

Tel. 637440.

De la Salle Church Tel. 661757.
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 623666.
Anglican Church Tel. 652826.
Armenian Catholic Church Tel.
771331.

Armenian Orthodox Church
Tel. 775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Armenian International Church
Tel. 865897.
Evangelical Lutheran Church
Tel. 824328.

German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 688404.
The Latter-Day Saints Tel.
654932.

Church of Nazareth Tel.
675691.
The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 811295.
English-speaking
Latin Catholics Parish Tel.
614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Skies will be partly cloudy, with a chance of scattered showers in the northern parts of the Kingdom. Winds will be westerly moderate. In Amman fine weather conditions will prevail. Winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Min/Max. temp.

Amman...05/13
Aqaba...11/23
Deserts...04/15
Jordan Valley...12/12

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 13, Aqaba 24 Humidity
readings: Amman 59 per cent.
Aqaba 37 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Ali Shukri...898363
Dr. Nidal Al Dahleh...827195
Dr. Hana Mansour...750197
Dr. Sa'ad Tawfiq...788285
Firas pharmacy...661912
Ferdows pharmacy...778336
Al Asema pharmacy...637055
Nairoukh pharmacy...623672
Al Salam pharmacy...636730
Yacoub pharmacy...644945
Shmevani pharmacy...637660
Najib pharmacy...847632

IRBID:
Dr. Ahmad Qanu...281484
Al Quds pharmacy...1

ZARQA:
Dr. Yousef Harzallah...988075
Khalifeh pharmacy...985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre...637111
Civil Defence Department...661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue
630341
Civil Defence Emergency...199
Rescue Police...192 621111 637777
Fire Brigade...617101
Blood Bank...775121
Highway Police...843402
Traffic Police...896390
Public Security Dept...630321
Hotel Complaints...605800
Price Complaints...661176
Water & Sewage Complaints...897467
Amman Municipality Complaints
787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance)...121
Overseas Calls...010230
Central Amman Telephone
Repairs...623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs...661101
Jordan Television...773111
Radio Jordan...774111
Water Authority...680100
J. Electricity Authority...815615
Electric Power Co...636381
RJ Flight Information...08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Luzmila...630195
Hussein Medical Centre...81381332
Khalidi Maternity...64281176
Alifeh Maternity...64241172
Jabal Amman Maternity...642362
Malhas, J. Amman...626141
Palestine, Shmeisani...607071
Shmeisani Hospital...669131
University Hospital...845845
Al-Muasher Hospital...6672279
The Islamic, Abdali...66612637
Al-Ahli, Abdali...66416476
Italian, Al-Muhajreen...77710173
Al-Bashir...77511126
Army, Marka...89161175
Queen Alia Hospital...60224050
Amal Hospital...674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and
Special Surgery...865199

ZARQA:
Govt. Hospital
Zarqa National Hospital
Zarqa National Hospital
Ibn Sina Hospital...099906732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital
16425 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
18:05...Casablanca, Tunis (RJ)
19:00...Bangkok (RJ)
20:30...Milan (RJ)
20:40...Vienna (RJ)
22:30 Kuala Lumpur, Abu Dhabi (RJ)

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital
Greek Catholic Hospital
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital

002247100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)532005, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 08 (52700).

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:15...Amman (RJ)
08:25...Damascus (RJ)
08:35...Jeddah (RJ)
09:15...New Delhi (RJ)
09:50...Doha, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:05...Beirut (RJ)
16:20...Cairo (RJ)
16:25...London (RJ)
16:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
18:05...Casablanca, Tunis (RJ)
18:35...Bangkok (RJ)
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PRINCE HASSAN INSPECTS TROOPS: His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Sunday pays a field trip to the Fourth and Fifth Mechanized Divisions, where he was received by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Field Marshal Abdul Hafez Mirai Kaabneh and other senior military officials. The Regent was briefed on the duties and activities of the divisions' units (Jordan Armed Forces photo)

Princess Basma named member of international democracy forum

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Princess Basma has been named member of the International Forum for Democracy and Development, a consulting body created by the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

Princess Basma received a letter from UNESCO Director General Federico Mayor informing her that she was

selected to join the 20-member forum, which represents various regions of the world.

The forum was set up to provide the UNESCO director general with advice on programmes that promote democracy, encourage personal initiatives, and enhance cooperation among various community sectors, according to Mr. Mayor's

letter. Princess Basma was recommended for membership in the forum by former U.N. Secretary General Boutros Ghali, the forum's designate chairperson. In view of her vast experience and interest in humanitarian issues, her activities in socio-economic development fields, and her membership in several specialised U.N. agencies and

international organisations, he said.

According to Mr. Mayor, it is now more important than ever to promote a democracy that enhances respect of human rights and gives impetus to development, which is an essential element of peace.

The forum is due to hold its first meeting in the first quarter of 1998, he added.

Jordan, Egypt continue preparations to link national power grids by mid-1998

AMMAN (J.T.) — Egypt and Jordan are currently finalising a project linking the two nations' electric power grids, which is expected to be completed by the second quarter of 1998, according to Mohammad Said Arafah, director general of the National Electric Power Company (NEPCO).

To a statement published Sunday by the Qatari daily Al Raya, Mr. Arafah said the project entails overland and underwater cables linking Aqaba port with the Sinai Peninsula. The project is part of an overall plan for linking the power grids of five

Middle Eastern countries: Jordan, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Turkey. The \$360 million project, funded in part by the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, will be carried out in several stages.

According to Mr. Arafah, Egypt and Jordan began planning this project in 1986 with the help of a French firm that conducted a feasibility study. The project was approved by the Joint Jordanian-Egyptian Higher Committee in 1989.

The project entails laying 400 kilovolt cables inside Jordanian territory and 500 kilovolt cables in

Egyptian territory and constructing a transformer station on the Egyptian side of the border near Taba, Mr. Arafah stated.

The linkage is expected to save the two countries at least \$5 million per year and will enable the two sides to provide each other with electric power in times of shortage or emergency, he stated.

Jordan started preparations in March 1997 for linking its electric power network with Syria via the transformer stations at Deraa in Syria and Irbid in Jordan, he said, adding that the linkage is expected to be operational in the

second half of 1999.

Ministers of electricity and energy in the five Middle Eastern countries approved the linkage project in 1989 during a meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Conference.

According to the overall plan, linkage of the power grids in Syria and Turkey will take place in mid-1998 through a 400 kilovolt cable. The linkage between Syria and Iraq will become operational in the year 2000, while the linkage between Iraq and Turkey is expected to take place in the year 2002.

Witnesses admit aiding three on trial for smuggling arms to West Bank

By Rana Hussein
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A key prosecution witness in the trial of three people accused of smuggling weapons to the West Bank told the State Security Court Sunday that he helped transport the weapons in his car.

Issa Hussein was testifying in the case of Ismail Shukri, 35, and Ali A. and Mohammad M., both being tried in absentia on charges of manufacturing explosives in 1995 and of smuggling weapons to the West Bank from 1995-1997.

The 37-year-old witness testified that the second and third defendants asked him to join them in trading

in copper and junk iron, since he owned a pick-up truck.

"We travelled several times to Ma'an and Madaba. Each time, Ali would ask me to stay in the truck for 30 minutes, and then he would return with a bag filled with machine guns and rifles," the witness said.

The witness added that the two defendants asked him to transport the weapons to the Zaza area near the Dead Sea, where they hid the arms until their apprehension by the authorities.

A second prosecution witness, Ibrahim Salem, a farmer from the Jordan Valley, said the third

defendant, whom he did not know, came to his farm and asked him if he knew anyone who wanted to rent land for agriculture.

"Two weeks later, he came to me with five machine guns and a rifle, and asked me if I knew anyone who wanted to buy them. Then he asked me to keep them," the 50-year-old witness said.

According to the prosecution charge sheet, the three defendants manufactured explosives in 1995 with the intent of using them against tourists and later began smuggling arms to the West Bank via the Dead Sea.

Military Prosecutor Lieutenant Colonel Mahmoud

Obeidat Sunday presented the court with the investigation file and rested the state's case, opening the way for the defence to provide its evidence and witnesses.

Attorney Saleh Armouti, one of seven lawyers defending Mr. Shukri, contested the interrogation procedures of the military prosecution for the third time.

Mr. Armouti also informed the court that Mr. Shukri wished to testify.

The military tribunal, headed by Judge Yousef Faouri and including Judges Ahmad Ayash and Fawaz Bqour, postponed the trial to Jan. 4 for this purpose.

Education ministry rejects applications by 1,500 teachers requesting retirement

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Ministry of Education has turned down requests by 1,500 teachers to retire early under the terms of a government offer announced last month. Minister of Education and Higher Education Munther Masri announced Sunday.

The applications were rejected because the ministry's schools cannot dispense with these teachers' services, he said.

The teachers were applying to take advantage of a government offer allowing public sector employees to retire with five annual increments added to their base salary for the purposes of determining a pension.

At a meeting with the chairpersons and members of the Educational Committees of the Lower House of Parliament and the Senate, Dr. Masri said the ministry is filling vacant posts in schools, and in some cases, requesting teachers to work overtime.

According to government sources Sunday, at least seven per cent, or approximately 25,800, of public sector employees will benefit from the government's offer and retire early.



Minister of Education and Higher Education Munther Masri Sunday briefs deputies and senators on the employment situation in the ministry's schools (Petra photo)

The government employs 342,300 citizens, or about 35 per cent of the total workforce, according to these sources, who added that the government does not intend to create new vacancies in the 1998 budget.

In past years, between 5,000 and 7,000 people annually were given employment in government offices, but in 1997

only 1,500 were appointed.

Meanwhile, a report in the local Arabic daily Al Ra'i Sunday said the government plans to make drastic changes in the regulations of the Civil Service Commission, which is in charge of appointments to government offices.

According to the report, the proposed plan stipulates that male employees

who complete 15 years of active service can request retirement and seek private sector jobs. After five more years, they would become eligible for a pension.

Female employees may do the same once they complete 12 consecutive years of service. They then must wait for three more years to start receiving a pension.

Engineer association elections rekindle debate on obligatory union membership

By Hind-Lara Mango
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Recent elections in the Jordan Engineers Association (JEA) have rekindled a dormant debate on whether membership in the country's 12 influential unions should be voluntary or obligatory, according to officials and analysts.

Around 3,400 engineers, out of a total membership of 39,000 members, cast their ballots in two rounds of JEA elections earlier this month in which a coalition of Islamists and nationalists won a landslide victory.

Officials and unionists who oppose the idea of compulsory membership in the associations said the lacklustre support in the ballot reflected voter apathy regarding the long-politicised unions, which they maintain have failed to improve the standard of the profession.

"We do not feel that unions have met the goals for which they were established," businessperson Mazen Tamimi told the Jordan Times.

"In practice, some of these unions have been converted into strong bases for exercising political action, such as boycotting," he added.

"The professional associations should address direct problems such as the issue of unemployment faced by new graduates, rather than letting political issues override professional priorities."

Others, however, have a different view of obligatory membership.

"Compulsory membership

gives the association the responsibility to monitor engineering projects and ensure quality control," said engineer Khalid Ramadan, a nationalist.

He said the association has been pressing for amendments to the decades-old professional associations law to reflect the needs of an increase in the number of members. "We sent the government a list of suggestions in 1984 but they were shelved."

Some engineers fear that by abolishing compulsory membership, the association will be weakened and the quality of work will go down, Mr. Ramadan added.

According to 'Azam Huneidi, spokesperson for the Islamists at the JEA, professional associations have a crucial role in the national economy and development and "any attempt to downsize their role will only reflect negatively on the country."

The simmering debate comes against a backdrop of increasing tension between the government and the Islamist-led opposition, which boycotted the Nov. 4 elections in protest at what they describe as diminishing public freedoms and the steady erosion of parliamentary authority under successive governments.

In the absence of a sizeable opposition in the new Parliament, many fear the unions — key critics of Jordan's 1994 peace treaty with Israel — will become a magnet for dissent.

The government of Prime

Minister Abdul Salam Majali has remained tight-lipped on suggestions to the new unions law.

The opposition fears the new changes will make membership voluntary instead of obligatory, thus reducing the number of members and diluting their strength.

Others have said the government might appoint managers to run each association as part of efforts to "de-politicise" them.

Present and former union chiefs and professionals have shown division regarding the planned amendments.

"The debate over memberships is not something that was born now," said Bassam Dajani, head of the Jordan Medical Association.

"The main objective behind raising it now is to stop the positive role of the associations, which have been struggling for the past 50 years," he told a recent seminar debating the issue.

"Obligatory membership serves patients by providing them with the best medical services," Dr. Dajani said. "Instead, debate should focus on whether cancelling the present obligatory membership will be in the interest of the citizen."

Former Minister of Health Zeid Hamzah said the idea of obligatory membership was against the Constitution and international human rights laws.

"Professionals should have the freedom to choose whether they want to become members or not," he stated.

Dr. Hamzah criticised the present laws, saying they allowed meetings of the general assemblies, usually attended by a minority, to "control the general policies of unions and the fate of the majority members."

According to their laws, nurses, doctors, journalists, engineers, lawyers, and other professionals cannot practice if they are not members.

Many unionists have suggested that any changes should come from within, not from the government, perceived by some as trying to silence them for their opposition to the peace treaty.

The associations have expelled many members for having contacts with Israelis and have blacklisted firms that have done business with the Jewish state.

"The government occasionally stirs trouble with the associations as part of the continued antagonism between them," said Islamist leader Ziyad Abu Ghanimeh, Islamic Hospital's deputy general manager.

"Their raising of the issue now is obviously linked to political developments taking place after the Wadi Araba [peace] treaty," he declared. "It is obvious that these associations are obstructing the dividends of the treaty."

For decades, the associations attracted opposition leaders and activists because of a 1957 ban imposed on political parties. The ban was lifted after His Majesty King Hussein launched democracy after 1989 price riots.

News In Brief

Princess Rania, PSD director discuss cooperation

Jordan, Yemen sign cooperation agreements

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Princess Rania Sunday visited the Public Security Department (PSD) and met with Director General Nasouh Muhiuddin. Princess Rania and General Muhiuddin reviewed scopes of cooperation between Jordan River Development Projects Society and the PSD in extending assistance to Jordanian families.

SANAA (Petra) — Jordan and Yemen Sunday signed six agreements on commercial, health, land and maritime transport, security, and investment protection cooperation. The agreements were signed by Jordanian Ambassador to Yemen Fouad Batayneh and Yemeni Deputy Foreign Minister Abdul Ali Abdul Rahman.

Nine win foundation's 1997 research award

AMMAN (J.T.) — Nine Jordanian researchers in the fields of agriculture, water, energy, industry, and the environment have won the Scientific Foundation of Hisham Audeh Hijawi Award for 1997.

Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali distributed the awards to the winners during a special ceremony held Saturday in Amman. The winners for the agriculture and water research work were Ahmad Raddad from the University of Jordan and Fawzi Banat from the Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST).

The winners for research in energy were Bassam Jubran and Mohammad Hamdan from the University of Jordan and Bassam Taan and Mohammad Al Din from the Royal Scientific Society (RSS).

The awards for research in industry and the environment went to Rami Jumaa from JUST, and Sami Kreishan, Samir Arar, and Osama Jaber from the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company.

In his speech, Ayman Hijawi, chairman of the foundation's board, stated that the awards represent

the foundation's contribution to the development of Jordan in various sectors and provide encouragement to the researchers to double their efforts.

The JD4,000 award for each type of research is offered to give impetus to Jordanian researchers to embark on scientific and technological research that can benefit their country and the Arab Nation and enable them to increase production, he added.

Established in 1981, the foundation opened a university technology college in 1983, which was accredited by the Council of Higher Education in 1989.

Its aim is to encourage technological and scientific research work by individuals and universities mainly in industry, energy, informatics, agriculture, water and the environment.

The winners of the annual awards are selected by a special board whose members examine the contestants' work, which should contribute to solving issues, promoting development, or increasing production in the various fields.

WHAT'S GOING ON

EXHIBITIONS

- * Display of Bani Hamida handicrafts (rugs, cushions, and wall hangings) at Bani Hamida House, Jabal Amman (Tel. 658696/7), until Jan. 5.
- * "Modern Bulgarian Art" at Baladna Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5537598), until Jan. 5.
- * Works by about a hundred artists from Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Lebanon and Jordan at Hammurabi Art Gallery, Gardens Street, until Feb. 20 (Tel. 5536098).
- * Exhibition of prints by Algerian artist Rashid Koraisi and calligraphy by Iraqi artist Hassan Masoudi, inspired by the poems of Mahmoud Darwish, at Darat Al Fuoun, Jabal Weibdeh, until Dec. 31. Also displaying paintings by Jordanian artist Nasr Abdul Aziz, and works by contemporary Arab artists.

50 hurt as police break up march against tribal peace treaty

DHAKA (AFP) — Around 50 people were injured here Sunday when police used batons and teargas to break up a planned rally and march by a Muslim fundamentalists against a government-tribal peace treaty.

Police waded in with batons and fired teargas shells as several hundred activists of the Islamic Oikkeya Jote (IOJ) began to assemble in a lane in downtown Purana Paltan district ahead of a "long march" to southeastern tribal hill districts near Chittagong.

The planned march was part of a series of anti-treaty protests. Some of the wounded Muslim activists were badly hurt and rushed to hospital.

Police made no immediate

comment, but members of one baton-wielding riot unit said they had orders to break up the rally and that several protesters were detained.

Witnesses said the police action came ahead of the arrival of senior IOJ leaders for the start of the rally.

There was no immediate reaction from the organisers of the 300-kilometre march. The caravan was to traverse the eastern town of Comilla and the port city of Chittagong before ending up Monday in Rangamati hill district town, organisers had said earlier.

The IOJ, headed by firebrand Muslim priest Saikhul Hadis Azizul Huq, is one of several Bangladeshi opposition parties and groups, spearheaded by former Prime

Minister Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), which fiercely oppose the Dec. 2 treaty between the government and tribal rebels aimed at ending a bloody two-decade-old insurgency.

The signing of the landmark treaty has provoked violent protests and counter-protests in the troubled hill region and elsewhere. The BNP and its allies have threatened to intensify street protests and continue a parliamentary boycott unless the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed scraps the "black treaty".

Ms. Zia, Sunday, criticised the government for rejecting her call for a conference to end the dispute. "This anti-people government refused our offer for a

discussion on the black accord," she told a rally of her party's cultural wing.

Over the weekend, she met President Shahabuddin Ahmed to hand over a memorandum asking him to convene a round table conference on the treaty.

Hasina Wajed has turned the proposal for discussion, arguing that parliament is the "appropriate place" to discuss it.

Ms. Zia reiterated that her party would not attend parliament if the accord was not scrapped. She vowed to carry on protests into the Muslim holy month of Ramadan which starts on Jan. 1.

"If the sovereignty of the country is not ensured we will lose our religion too," she said.



Police arrest two young activists of Bangladesh's Islami Oikyo Jote (unity council) in Dhaka, during a protest against peace efforts in Chittagong Hill Tracts (Reuters photo)

Bosnian Serb hardliners refused power share in Serb entity

BIJELJINA, Bosnia-Herzegovina (AFP) — Bosnian Serb hardliners loyal to war crimes suspect Radovan Karadzic have refused to share power with supporters of President Biljana Plavsic and blocked elections of new assembly and government officials of the Serb entity.

The Bosnian Serb parliament, elected last month, met for the first time Saturday in northern Bosnian town of Bijeljina, but adjourned the session to Jan. 12 after failing to agree on new leaders.

After almost 10 hours of work, it only managed to verify the mandates of the 83 newly-elected deputies in the assembly, in which no one party holds an absolute majority.

Hanns Schumacher, number two to the international community's High Representative for Bosnia Carlos Westendorp, warned the assembly to speed up its proceedings.

It said Mr. Westendorp might impose measures on the parliament under recently acquired powers if it did not act on its own.

Effective power-sharing in the semi-autonomous state in Bosnia looked unlikely in the short term as both sides continued to cling to diametrically opposed positions.

During the inaugural session, hardliners managed, by scraping along over the agenda and technical formalities, to avoid electing assembly officials or a new premier for the Serb entity, Republika Srpska (RS).

Hardliners from Mr. Karadzic's Serb

Democratic Party (SDS) and its ally, the Serb Radical Party (SRS), clinched the most votes in the parliamentary ballot and held 39 seats in the new assembly — but were left three seats short of a majority.

They demanded that all parliament officials' posts be given to their parties and said that even the premier's post be offered to them, since they represented a majority of voters in the RS.

However Ms. Plavsic, who won international backing by pledging to support the Dayton peace accords, put forward her candidate for the post of prime minister in the next Serb government, Mladen Ivanic, an economics professor from her main base, Banja Luka.

Mr. Ivanic is a moderate who earned the enmity of the hardline faction among the Bosnian Serbs when he ran for the post of Serb representative in Bosnia's three-man presidency in elections in September 1996.

His candidacy cost the eventual winner of the post, Momcilo Krajcinik, just enough votes to ensure that he did not become overall president of Bosnia, a post that went to the Muslim, Alija Izetbegovic.

Plavsic's Serb Popular Alliance (SNS), formed earlier this year, won 15 seats, with other relative moderates winning 11, giving them a total of 26 deputies in the assembly.

It was estimated that Mr. Ivanic could be supported by parties from the Muslim-Croat Federation — the

other entity making up post-war Bosnia, which represents mainly Muslim and Croat refugee voters and has 18 seats in the assembly.

But Aleksa Buha, acting head of the SDS, called on Ms. Plavsic to withdraw her proposal of Mr. Ivanic as premier, saying he and his allies were not ready for "any compromise on the post of prime minister as we have our own candidate" — hardline incumbent Gojko Kljickovic.

Since the start of the conflict between the two Serb factions in June, the RS governing institutions have been loyal to hardliners based in their stronghold, Pale, near Sarajevo, rejecting Ms. Plavsic's presidential authority.

The hardliners have staunchly blocked attempts to allow refugees to return home or to cooperate with Bosnia's joint institutions set up by the Dayton peace accords, which in 1995 ended almost four years of war.

The early polls in November were called in an attempt to end the crippling power struggle among Bosnian Serb leaders.

But the political battle has split the RS in two — with Ms. Plavsic controlling the west around her stronghold of Banja Luka and the hardliners the east around Pale.

New nationwide elections are due in Bosnia in September next year at which Western officials hope more moderates will be elected to begin full implementation of the Dayton accords.

Police threaten Chinese dissident with mental asylum

BEIJING (AFP) — Chinese dissident Wang Hongxue said Sunday that police were threatening to lock him up in a mental asylum.

Mr. Wang told AFP that police summoned his wife and parents to the Bengbu City Public Security Bureau in eastern Anhui province two weeks ago and told them that authorities believed he was suffering from schizophrenia.

The officials pressured them to place him in a psychiatric hospital and said they would make sure his employer — a textile factory infirmary — would pay for a long-term stay, Mr. Wang said.

During a similar interview more recently, police told Mr. Wang directly that he may be schizophrenic.

"It is possible I will be thrown in a mental hospital," he said.

The New York-based Human Rights in China said in a faxed statement that police "demanded" that Mr. Wang's family members sign documents to have him institutionalised. But the dissident said his wife's and parents' accounts included no

such details.

The statement, signed by Human Rights in China chairman and former dissident Liu Qing, attacked the use of mental institutions for persecuting dissidents.

"Human Rights in China appeals to the international community to play close attention to the danger facing Wang Hongxue," it said, calling for pressure to discourage the Chinese government from suppressing political activists by locking them away in psychiatric institutions.

Mr. Wang, 37, has in recent months issued a series of open letters to China's leaders urging political reforms, although Human Rights in China said he had no history of activism before this year.

He voiced support last week for a call by fellow dissident Qin Yongmin for workers to be allowed to form their own trade unions.

Mr. Qin — who also received support from dissidents Xu Shuliang and Leng Wanbao — Saturday wrote an open letter to the U.N. Human Rights Commission complaining

of tight police surveillance and harassment.

Only government-run trade unions are allowed in China. The ruling Communist Party is loath to open the door to the emergence of a labour-based political rival, like Poland's Solidarity movement.

In a declaration which he vowed to circulate using his "own means," Mr. Qin last Monday urged workers to count on themselves to help eliminate corruption among state-owned factory managers.

The veteran Wuhan-based dissident cited the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights — which China signed in October — as protecting the right to form independent unions, to demonstrate and to strike.

Sporadic worker demonstrations have broken out across the country in recent months against a rising tide of state-sector layoffs and embezzlement by managers of state firms.

The heavily overstaffed state sector employs more than 100 million people in China's cities.

British Euro-MPs threaten to leave Labour

LONDON (AFP) — Six British European Parliament members plan to leave the Labour Party and become independent candidates in protest against British government welfare reforms, the Observer newspaper said Sunday.

The two leaders of the left-wing rebellion named in the article — Ken Coates and Hugh Kerr — said they wanted to fight the next European elections in 1999 as independents following Labour's decision to cut benefits for single mothers and proposal to reduce payments for the disabled.

They said Prime Minister Tony Blair's "restrictive social policies" were pushing Labour towards the radical right, and making the party "indistinguishable" from the former Conservative administration.

Both men were suspended by Labour, and then readmitted in November, for refusing to adhere to a code of conduct which forbade Labour legislators in Strasbourg from commenting on procedures governing the selection of candidates.

Labour MP in Westminster David Winnick said the rebels were heading towards the "political wilderness."

Incoming Swiss president wants EU membership

LAUSANNE, Switzerland (AFP) — Incoming Swiss President Flavio Cotti spoke out in favour of Switzerland joining the European Union in an interview published Sunday.

"Membership is in the interest of Switzerland," said Mr. Cotti, the current Swiss foreign minister who becomes president on Jan. 1, in an article in Le Matin newspaper.

Switzerland is in the process of negotiating bilateral agreements with the EU, but Mr. Cotti said full entry into the union as early as possible was the strategic goal.

The Swiss public rejected greater participation in the EU in a December 1992 referendum, when they were offered the benefits and duties of a member state without having to take up full membership.

"Bilateral agreements are the priority for now, but the strategic goal of Swiss political integration (into the EU) remains clear. The sooner, the better for Switzerland," he said.

Pope denounces attacks against family

CASTELGANDOLFO, Italy (AFP) — Pope John Paul II Sunday warned against attacks on family unity such as individualism, abortion and euthanasia, poverty, unemployment and homelessness.

In his last Sunday service of the year, the Pope implicitly criticised unmarried and homosexual couples and procreation through surrogate mothers.

"The family is the basis and safeguard of a truly free and close-knit society," the Pope said, but it faced "attacks and challenges from all sides."

He underscored the urgency of protecting and promoting the "authentic rights" of the family.

Mayor charged in Mexican massacre

TUXTLA GUTIERREZ, Mexico (AFP) — A small town mayor with Mexico's ruling party was formally charged Saturday in connection with last week's massacre of 45 villagers in Chiapas, where tensions remained high.

Jacinto Arias Cruz, the mayor of the rugged hill town of Chenalhó, appeared before a federal judge here and was charged with providing arms to those who carried out the murders of 45 people Dec. 22.

Arias Cruz is a member of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) which has ruled Mexico since 1929.

Assistant Attorney General Jose Luis Ramos told reporters here that witnesses pointed to Arias Cruz as the instigator of the massacre in the nearby village of Acteal, saying that in addition to providing arms he supplied the killers with vehicles, including one owned by the mayor's office.

Mr. Ramos also said Arias Cruz lied in an effort to cover up the crime, telling authorities that he did not learn of the massacre until the day after it happened. But officials discovered notes to his home with details of the killings.

Twenty-three others appeared before the judge Saturday, bringing to 40 the number of those charged in connection with the killings. Sources said the charges include murder and unlawful transport of firearms.

The weapons used included .22- and .45-calibre firearms, the attorney general's office said.

A total of 140 warrants have been issued against suspects in the bloodshed in Chiapas, a poor state in southern Mexico where the central government's control is shaky against guerrilla activities by the leftist

Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN).

EZLN rebel leader Subcomandante Marcos said earlier Saturday that the masterminds of the massacre came from "very high" up in the PRI-controlled Mexican government. Local church and human rights groups have attributed the killings to those aligned with the PRI.

"According to evidence that has been found one can deduce that the Acteal crime was prepared ahead of time... with the direction of state government officials and the complicity of several ministries of the federal government," Cmdr. Marcos said in a statement.

Cmdr. Marcos' army first appeared in Chiapas in January 1994, finding support among the indigenous Maya population. The government said its investigation was only in its initial phase and that it was continuing to seek those who plotted the massacre.

The murdered Maya numbered 21 women, 14 children, nine men and one infant.

Mexican Attorney General Jorge Madrazo described the clashes as stemming from "inter-community and even intra-family conflicts in a context of constant disputes over political and economic power."

"Unfortunately, these are not isolated events," he said in a statement, adding that some of the disputes dated to the 1930s.

There are also ideological disputes between local PRI leaders, who are sometimes only tenuously linked to Mexico City, and Maya sympathetic to the EZLN.

Authorities also said that the number of injured survivors of the killing rose to 31 as six wounded people were found wandering the mountains.

Congress I asks leaders not to desert party

NEW DELHI (AFP) — The chief of India's Congress I party Sunday appealed to disgruntled colleagues not to desert him ahead of elections early next year.

Sitaram Kesri said party leaders "who have enjoyed the privileges of office when the Congress was in power" should not quit with fresh polls looming.

"I have no complaint against those who have left the party," he told a meeting of party activists here. "But I appeal to (others) not to leave the party."

Mr. Kesri's appeal came following a string of stunning desertions by high-profile Congress members, arguing the 112-year-old party was headed for a disaster in the hustings to the 545-seat parliament.

Some of them have joined the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's

Party), which is widely expected to be front-runner in the elections.

Most of those leaving the Congress have lashed out at Mr. Kesri, saying he had done little for the party since taking over the leadership last year and blundered by toppling India's coalition government last month.

Newspapers say more Congress members are expected to quit the party.

Although the Congress claims it is in the race for power in the polls, party leaders admit its chances are bleak. Some analysts have warned that it was like a sinking ship and could be routed.

The Congress is India's oldest party. But its influence has eroded rapidly in recent years. It was voted out in New Delhi in the 1996 elections after a five-year reign.

Gunman surrenders after killing 2, injuring 2

CHARTRES, France (AFP) — An armed man boled up in a house in a village southwest of Paris gave himself up to police early Sunday after killing two people and injuring two others, all members of the same family.

The 31-year-old man, shot dead a young woman and fatally injured her mother, who died in hospital during the night. The young woman's father was wounded in the abdomen but not in danger while her sister received only superficial injuries, police said.

The gunman, who had locked himself in the bathroom, handed over his firearm and let himself be arrested early Sunday

after more than five hours of negotiations during the night.

Members of the man's family inside the house were said to have helped police open negotiations.

Investigators said a love relationship was believed to have caused the drama, which started around 6.00 p.m. Saturday night in the small village of Charray of 130 inhabitants.

Police alerted after the young man opened fire threw a cordon of 40 men around the house, on the edge of the village, and managed to evacuate the injured.

Police did not immediately release the name of the gunman or his victims.

North Korea honours widow of cold war correspondent

SEOUL (AFP) — North Korea has honoured Vest Burchett, widow of Australian "cold war" journalist Wilfred Burchett, for her support for "the Korean people's struggle," the North's media said Sunday.

The "Order of Friendship Second Class" was presented to Mrs. Burchett at the Mansudae Assembly Hall in Pyongyang on Christmas Day by Vice President Pak Song-chol, said the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA).

Burchett covered the 1950-53 Korean war and later the Vietnam war

working with the South's Liberation Front. Barred for years from returning to Australia, he lived in Phnom Penh and later in Paris.

KCNA said Vest Burchett "conducted energetic activities in support of the Korean people's struggle for the building of socialism and the independent and peaceful reunification of the country with deep reverence for the great leader president Kim Il-Sung."

North Korea's decision to bestow an honour on Vest Burchett was a reward for Wilfred Burchett's staunch sup-

port, one of his critics said in Australia.

Burchett, who was known in the West as a reporter who covered the cold war from the "other side", was a "Soviet agent of influence and a major propagandist," former war correspondent and author Denis Warner said.

Warner and Burchett were both World War II correspondents but their relationship deteriorated until Burchett unsuccessfully sued Warner for libel over his reporting of Burchett's activities.

"I am not in the least surprised," Warner said of the award.

"Burchett was a great supporter of North Korea during the Korean war" and was also involved in key interrogations of American prisoners of war, he told AFP.

Warner said Burchett's letters made it clear that his wife, a member of the Bulgarian Communist Party, was deeply involved in his work.

In a 1951 letter to a member of the Australian Communist Party, he stated that their only wish on getting married was to combine their talents for the good of the cause.



An Indonesian security guard stands near the debris of Singapore's SilkAir Boeing 737-300 at a hangar in Palembang, capital of south Sumatra (Reuters photo)

SilkAir crash jet's black box off to U.S. as mass grave prepared

JAKARTA (AFP) — The flight recorder from a SilkAir jet which crashed killing 104 people last week, was to be sent to the United States Sunday for decoding.

Divers in South Sumatra have been unable to recover a single body intact from the 104 passengers and crew on the Boeing 737-300 flight, and investigators are planning a mass grave for the remains which have been recovered, the Republik daily reported.

Transport Minister Haryanto Dhanutirto said the remains would be buried in the South Sumatra capital of Palembang or near the crash site 65 kilometres away in Sunggang, a small fishing village.

The data recorder was found Saturday embedded in the aircraft wreckage on Dec. 19, the state Antarkas news agency reported.

Mr. Dhanutirto said the device would be sent to the National Transportation Safety Board in Washington, DC.

The head of the Indonesian Air Crash Investigation Commission said the search would continue for the cockpit voice recorder.

"We can carry out the investigation with one of the recordings, but sometimes we need both of them to be sure of the results," Utarjo Diran said. Thick layers of silt and the fast currents of the Musi River have hampered divers' efforts to salvage the remains of the Boeing 737-300.

"It's difficult because of the zero visibility conditions," Xavier Lim told AFP.

The recorder was reportedly intact and in good condition despite having been under water for eight days, the Suara Pembaruan afternoon daily reported Sunday. The recovered flight data recorder monitors critical instrument readings including the flight path, altitude, speed and direction of the plane.

The cockpit voice recorder captures radio transmissions, and sounds in the cockpit, such as the pilots' voices, and engine noises.

Investigators have been unwilling to speculate on the cause of the tragedy, but several villagers near the crash site reported hearing explosions before the plane went down. Less than 20 per cent of the

plane has been recovered.

Singapore's Sunday Times cautioned, however, that discovery of the black boxes from crashed planes did not always bring investigators any closer to the truth.

A pilot of more than 30 years told the Sunday Times: "You can tell what happened to the plane, but you cannot tell what caused it to happen that way."

A probe could take months or years, he said, as investigators must look at supporting evidence such as the spread of the wreckage.

The flight data recorder was the first major find for investigators, nine days after the 10-month-old jet crashed, on a flight from Jakarta to Singapore.

Other fragments recovered from the plane have all been badly torn apart, including one of the wheels found shredded.

No one of the 97 passengers or seven crew members is believed to have survived the crash, the first in the history of SilkAir or its parent company, Singapore Airlines. Indonesian and Singaporean investigators have set Jan. 2 as the deadline for the search.

Northern Ireland fears retaliatory attacks after prison murder

BELFAST (AFP) — Northern Ireland fears a wave of retaliatory attacks after a man was shot dead in an upsurge of violence Saturday, hours after a renegade loyalist paramilitary leader was murdered in prison.

The Saturday night incident at a hotel and nightclub in Dungannon, south-west of Belfast, was the most serious since an IRA ceasefire gave a boost to the peace process in July.

A 45-year-old man died after being shot in the head and three people, including a 14-year-old boy, were wounded when masked men pulled into a carpark in Dungannon and opened fire, apparently at random.

The killing was part of an outbreak of violence which saw two buses and several cars hijacked and burnt late Saturday in Protestant-majority areas in the wake of the murder of loyalist

extremist Billy "King Rat" Wright, 37, in the top security Maze prison earlier in the day.

Wright was shot dead by two inmates belonging to the extreme Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) who climbed onto a roof and fired on the head of the 100-strong Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF) as he waited for a van to take him to a visitors' area.

Afterwards the men surrendered two firearms and turned themselves in to prison authorities.

Immediate threats of reprisals for the killing came from the LVF, which pledged in a statement to increase its "theatre of operations" in the coming weeks.

The target of Saturday night's attack — a hotel-nightclub frequented by Catholics — strongly indicated it was a response to the murder of Wright,

although no information was known about the victim.

Despite calm in the province Sunday morning following the overnight trouble, politicians and police were appealing to both communities to avoid action which could threaten the peace process, kick-started when the IRA announced a ceasefire in July.

Police threw up roadblocks on the main roads between Catholic and Protestant neighbourhoods of Belfast to block sectarian clashes.

The leader of the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), Ken Maginnis, called for calm Sunday "before the situation gets out of hand."

In a television interview with GMTV, he also called for the resignation of the British secretary of state for Northern Ireland, Mo Mowlam. Mr. Mowlam

rejected the demand and was among voices appealing for calm, including U.S. President Bill Clinton.

An internal inquiry is to be launched at the Maze, which holds 500 inmates, both loyalist and nationalist paramilitaries, making it the largest terrorist detention centre in Western Europe.

Police will also hold an enquiry into how INLA prisoners obtained weapons to carry out the attack on Wright.

Wright's murder has enflamed the Protestant community despite his controversial position as an active opponent of the ceasefire.

Loyalists who wish to maintain links with Britain have already been angered by what they perceive as favourable treatment towards Republican prisoners.

Some smaller loyalist

groups regarded as important to the peace process have threatened to pull out from negotiations.

Loyalist hardliners accuse London and Dublin of selling out to the republicans.

Representatives of Protestant militias have threatened to quit the talks in the New Year following a meeting between British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Gerry Adams, head of the IRA's political wing, Sinn Fein.

Wright, who was serving eight years on a conviction of making death threats, had a death sentence put on his head by the Combined Loyalist Paramilitary Command for his vociferous opposition to the ceasefire.

The renegade force he headed has been held responsible for the murders of at least four Catholics since its creation in 1996.

Hashimoto regrets murder of Japanese students in Peru

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan's Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto Sunday expressed regret at the murder of two Japanese students in Peru, for which 14 Peruvian soldiers have been detained.

"If members of the military killed them, it is totally outrageous," Mr. Hashimoto said.

Chiaki Ito, 22, and Takahiro Miyashita, 23, both of Tokyo's Waseda University, were killed while on an Amazon River expedition. Their bodies were reportedly hacked to bits.

Mr. Hashimoto also said however that more care should be taken in planning foreign trips.

The detained soldiers were members of a military unit that controls river traffic from Peru to Colombia and Brazil, officials in Lima said.

"In Peru, there are terrorist organisations other than the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) and ten-

sion is running high between them and the government troops."

"What I don't know is how safety arrangements there were made in advance," the prime minister said. "Adventure is fraught with danger. And that danger should be kept to the minimum through preparations well in advance."

"Being an adventure fan myself, I doubt if they made sufficient preparations in advance," Mr. Hashimoto told reporters at his official residence.

One year ago, leftist MRTA rebels seized the Japanese ambassador's residence in Lima and held hostage hundreds of guests at a Dec. 17 reception to honour Japanese Emperor Akihito's birthday.

The 126-day standoff ended with the deaths of 17 people, including all 14 rebels, one hostage and two soldiers.

Expulsion order against foreign journalist delayed in Cambodia

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — Cambodia will delay an expulsion order against a Western television correspondent to give him time to apologise for allegedly "unfair reporting," a senior official said Sunday.

Secretary of State for Information Khieu Kanharith said an apology would end the expulsion threat against veteran Canadian journalist Ed Fitzgerald of Asia Business News (ABN).

"Up to now, I have not received any response from Ed," Khieu Kanharith said. "I have not signed the order yet and I will give him one more day. It all depends on him."

Fitzgerald, dean of the foreign press corps in Phnom Penh, said Sunday he could not comment on the expulsion or the requested apology as he had still received no official word on the matter which came to light Friday.

Khieu Kanharith said

only an apology from Fitzgerald, coupled with a correction for "false information" contained in a 30-minute "Year in Review" programme aired last week could rescind the order.

The story cast doubts on whether Cambodia's judicial system was independent, citing apparently selective and politically-motivated prosecutions, an allegation that Khieu Kanharith termed "untrue and unfair."

The delay in executing the order came as an international press watchdog condemned the decision to expel Fitzgerald, who has been covering Cambodia since 1988 and has lived in Phnom Penh since 1992.

"This decision is in complete contradiction with the current words of the Cambodian authorities, which have affirmed a return to democratic practices and the restoration of freedoms," Reporters Without Borders said Saturday.

urday in an open letter to Second Prime Minister Hun Sen, ABN was one of four news outlets criticised publicly by Hun Sen for giving Cambodia a bad reputation and scaring off much-needed investment after the violent ouster of co-Prime Minister Norodom Ranariddh.

Hun Sen also named CNN, the New York Times and the Washington Post as offenders but only ABN has a correspondent based permanently in Cambodia. Last week, the government warned the national and international press it would take legal action against them if their reporting was deemed to be biased.

The government also instructed them to use two official sources when reporting on any subject which could "affect national security or political stability."

The two items are covered in Cambodia's press law.

Hong Kong to slaughter all chickens to stop bird flu

HONG KONG (AFP) — The Hong Kong government Sunday ordered the slaughter of all chickens in the territory in a bid to stamp out deadly bird flu which has killed four people and caused rising panic.

Between 1.2 million and 1.3 million chickens at farms and markets would be destroyed in a massive 24-hour operation starting Monday, the government said.

Fourteen new outpatient centres would be opened to cope with hundreds of anxious people who have besieged hospitals and clinics fearing they may have caught the virus, officials said.

The slaughter was ordered after the discovery of large numbers of dead chickens at a farm and the sudden deaths of chickens in a market.

It was announced as health officials confirmed that a woman who died last Tuesday had been suffering from the H5N1 virus.

The deadly flu, previously only found in poultry, also claimed the lives of two children and a 54-year-old man.

"The government has decided in public health interests to kill birds in all local farms as it is difficult to say if cross infection has taken place," said Director of Health Dr. Margaret Chan.

Economic Services Secretary Stephen Ip said the slaughter was necessary as birds could have

passed on the disease when they were kept together in farms before being moved on to markets.

"Cross infection could not be ruled out," he said.

As soon as the farms and markets have been cleared of chickens the facilities will be disinfected in a "thorough cleansing," Assistant Director of Agriculture and Fisheries K.K. Liu said.

Birds will be slaughtered with carbon dioxide and the disinfected carcasses will be dumped at landfill sites.

A farm in Yuen Long, where the dead birds were found and a market at Cheung Sha Wan were Sunday placed under quarantine.

A ban on imports of chickens from the mainland will remain until the operation is complete and tests confirm that birds on the mainland are clear of the virus, Mr. Liu said.

Mr. Ip said he would approach the Provisional Legislature for funding to compensate owners of slaughtered birds. Initial estimates put the cost per bird at around 30 Hong Kong dollars (\$3.8), he said.

Dr. Chan said samples would be taken from pigs, ducks, geese and other poultry kept near chickens to make sure the virus had not spread.

She reiterated that there was only a slim chance that the bird flu could be passed between humans

and that the main mode of transmission was from bird to human. She advised anyone who had bought live poultry to clean their hands and dispose of the birds.

Health checks would also be provided for chicken farmers and poultry workers, Dr. Chan said.

Besides the four deaths, another eight confirmed and eight suspected cases of the H5N1 virus have been identified.

Meanwhile, the head of the World Health Organisation (WHO) virus unit in Geneva, Dr. Daniel Lavanchy, was quoted by the Sunday Standard newspaper as saying he believed a doctor had caught the virus from a patient.

The patient, a boy who died in May, became the world's first known human victim of the virus.

Public panic over the outbreak has spread across the border to China's Guangdong province, the Sing Tao Daily reported.

Even though Chinese authorities say no trace of the virus has been found on the mainland, sales of chickens have plunged between 10 and 20 per cent in Guangzhou and in Shenzhen on the border with Hong Kong.

The price of the birds has dropped 10 per cent in both places, mirroring the situation in Hong Kong where chicken sales have plunged.

Talk of merger jumps the gun — Buthelezi

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — Talk of a merger between the Zulu nationalist Inkatha Freedom Party and South Africa's ruling ANC is premature, IFP leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi said in a letter to a newspaper published Sunday.

"Because a number of issues relating to a peace pact between the IFP and the African National Congress (ANC) had still to be resolved, Mr. Buthelezi said, 'talking about a merger of the two parties is tantamount to jumping the gun.'"

Vicious factional fighting between the two parties has cost more than 20,000 lives in 11 years in eastern KwaZulu-Natal province and in migrant workers' hostels in black townships surrounding Johannesburg.

But there were strong indications at this month's ANC conference that the party leadership was considering an alliance of the two biggest black parties in South Africa.

President Nelson Mandela set the tone when he said on television that an alliance with the IFP, the ANC's traditional enemy, would allow black South Africans to "speak with one voice."

Mr. Buthelezi, in his letter to the Sunday Independent weekly, said talk by the ANC of merger was "no more than kite flying, as it has not been formally presented to me and the IFP."

"People who talk so glibly about a merger are insensitive to the killing between members of the ... ANC and

the IFP," he said, adding that at least 400 IFP leaders and "thousands of our members and supporters" had been killed in the ongoing power struggle.

"The IFP certainly seeks rapprochement with the ANC and reconciliation in order to agree to differ on policy matters without the killings, which even now continue unabated," Mr. Buthelezi added.

Earlier this month, senior IFP official Sipo Mzimela, correctional services minister in Mr. Mandela's national unity government, set the ball rolling when he called for a merger with the ANC.

He was immediately slapped down by the IFP's 35-member national coordinating committee, which said Mr. Mzimela's views did not reflect IFP policies.

In a separate article, meanwhile, the Sunday Independent carried interviews with IFP members who have borne the brunt of the political violence, at the Zulu-speaking Dube Hostel in Soweto, near Johannesburg.

In the main, according to the report, IFP women supported a merger as they believed it would bring a halt to the bloodletting.

Men, however, were vehemently opposed to an alliance with their bitter enemies.

"The ANC has long killed our brothers and now they want to be one with us," one man, Petros Hlongwane, said. "There is a lot that must be done before we can talk of a merger."

National Project Coordinator

We are launching an innovative project in the field of micro-enterprise development and training. The objective of this project is to generate employment in handicrafts through the development of adequate training mechanisms and business support services, among which the establishment of a business incubator. This project will combine direct support to micro enterprises, institutional development and policy advice.

we are looking for a motivated project coordinator who will ensure the overall management and coordination of the project. The coordinator will carry out project planning and implementation as well as a number of specific tasks such as undertaking needs assessments, identifying opportunities, undertaking market research and feasibility studies, defining and implementing a strategy for the establishment of a business incubator, promoting cost-effective services to the artisans and evaluating their impact, preparing progress reports, etc..

Qualifications required

- A university degree in business administration, economics, marketing, engineering, or related disciplines.
- A minimum of eight years of experience in the private sector in the field of small enterprise development or the promotion of craft development activities, with proven skills in small business consultancy and training, and managerial experience.
- Excellent managerial, organizational and administrative skills.
- Strong analytical and conceptual skills with an ability to address both macro and micro issues and apply these skills in the day to day implementation of the project.
- Capacity to develop feasibility studies, sectoral studies and business opportunity identification plans.
- Ability to adjust to changing market conditions.
- Ability to foster partnership and support.
- Effective verbal and written communication and negotiation skills.
- Experience at developing and maintaining relationships at all levels.
- Proficiency in written and spoken English and Arabic.
- Excellent computer skills with experience of software packages related to business administration and planning.

Starting date: the appointment will commence as soon as possible, after the satisfactory outcome of post-interview enquiries.

Applications for this post are sought from both men and women.

Applications in English with detailed curriculum vitae showing positions held and current salary should be submitted to P. O. Box 35286, stating Ref. NATCOORD clearly on your envelope.

Closing date for receipt of completed applications is 15 January 1998.

Only shortlisted applicants will be contacted.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation. Established 1975.
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Mission made difficult

IT IS bad enough that Jordanian dailies and weeklies have to operate under the current Press and Publications Law; to carry out their journalistic duties under the new restrictions imposed upon them by the Parliament's General Secretariat makes their mission simply unbearable. No wonder all the daily newspapers have decided to boycott Parliament's session and will not cover its deliberations until their grievances are addressed.

We need to view the recent limitations on the free movement of reporters in the Parliament building in their wider context. In the wake of the adoption of the current press law, the journalists appear to have been the target of attacks from not just one but several sides. What possible damage can ensue from the free movement of reporters to warrant the new curbs? How can a viable and operational democracy function and attain its ultimate objectives in the absence of a dynamic and responsible media? Should Parliament decide to conduct its debates in camera we might be able to understand the new limitations. But this is not the case now. Sessions of Parliament should be as free and as accessible to the public as possible. Otherwise there is no sense in holding public debates as distinguished from closed doors meetings.

We therefore call for the immediate lifting of the restrictions on the free movement of reporters and call on the speakers of both the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament to reexamine their secretariat's decision in this regard. There is a thin line that separates in-house regulations from anti-democratic measures that need to be kept in mind and respected. Freedom of the press cannot be safeguarded if the journalists are taken for granted under whatever guise that suits the officials. The sooner the dispute between parliamentary officials and the newspapers is settled, the better it would be for our country as a whole.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Rai's Fahed Funeik Sunday urged the government to request the U.N. sanctions committee to allow Royal Jordanian planes to transport passengers and humanitarian aid to Iraq. It is true that earlier requests by Jordan were rejected by the committee, but most recently it granted permission for a maritime route between Dubai and Um Qasr port in Iraq, with vessels carrying food and medicine in exchange for oil which the U.N. has allowed Iraq to export, said the writer. During his recent visit to Jordan Iraq's deputy prime minister, Tareq Aziz, said there is nothing in the sanctions regime that prohibits civilian aircraft from flying to and from Baghdad, and it is up to Jordan to take the decision in this matter, according to the writer. Nothing that Jordan has secured the U.N. committee's permission to continue to import Iraqi oil, a matter which is considered more difficult to attain, the writer said the Kingdom can try to secure flights at least for humanitarian reasons. He said Jordan, which enjoys high credibility in the eyes of the world community, can benefit from air transport with Iraq as much as the Iraqis can. He said Amman will certainly open the door for further Iraqi contacts with the outside world, reducing the psychological barrier now separating Iraq from the world community.

Al Aswaq's Mohammad Amin said that since Jordan depends on Iraq for oil and for a great part of its national exports, it should seek and make plans for laying a pipeline to carry Iraqi oil to the refinery in Zarqa or to the seaport at Aqaba. Without Iraqi oil, Jordan will find it most difficult to purchase its needs of this precious commodity for its industry and domestic needs, he said. The private sector in Jordan which benefits from the continuation of Iraqi oil flow to Jordan can and should contribute to the construction of this pipeline, he added. Furthermore, Jordan is in need of a modern railway connecting it with Iraq. This offers a cheap means for transporting Jordanian products to Iraqi markets and transporting Iraqi goods imported via Aqaba, according to the writer. As Iraq constitutes the strategic depth of Jordan, and as the Kingdom's main market in Iraq which is buying Jordanian products and as Iraqi oil is bought at concessionary prices, Jordan has every reason to begin laying an oil pipeline and a railway, said the writer. Such projects, he added, are bound to secure the necessary muscle for Jordan's industry and can help the Kingdom's unemployed find jobs.

Economic Review

By Dr. Yusuf Mansur

Developing countries and globalisation: An assessment

DEVELOPING COUNTRIES have been moving toward globalisation through removal of protectionist policies, harmonisation of standards, liberalisation of trade through the dismantling of customs and non-customs barriers, and the opening of their banking sectors allowing the free-flow of capital earnings. Between 1965-95 33 countries became relatively open economies. In fact, developing countries, which have liberalised their economies between 1988-92, have been some of the fastest growing in terms of exports and imports. But has globalisation benefited the developing countries? The answer depends on whether one is thinking in absolute or relative terms.

On the positive side, the share of the developing countries in trade worldwide has increased from 23 per cent in 1985 to 29 per cent in 1995. Inter-trade among developing countries has increased from 31 per cent of their total trade in 1985 to 37 per cent in 1995. Furthermore, manufacturing seems to have assumed a larger role in trade as the manufacturing component of exports has increased from 47 per cent in 1985 to 83 per cent in 1995.

In addition, capital markets in developing countries have become more connected to the capital markets of the advanced countries as net capital flows to developing countries averaged \$150 billion per annum in the period 1993-96 and came close to \$200 billion in 1996. Most investment flows were in the form of portfolio and capital investment, with private capital flows representing almost four per cent of

the GDP in developing countries between 1994-1996.

Labour on the other hand did not fare as well as capital, possibly due to the immobility of labour relative to capital. Furthermore, labour was forced to undergo structural adjustment due to the technological revolution that spurred the growth of the developed economies in the 90s. Thus, unemployment in developing economies may increase in the short run as these economies undergo a transformation process similar to those already under way in advanced economies. In other words, as capital replaces labour, the latter becomes unemployed in the short run. In the medium to long terms, and as labour becomes better trained, unemployment should fall in these economies, hopefully to below present levels.

Inter-country labour flows have increased dramatically in the past 30 years. In 1965, only 75 million people lived in countries in which they were not born; in 1990, this number almost doubled as it increased to 120 million. Labour flows have been primarily between developing countries, possibly due to tough immigration laws and restrictions on labour movement from the developing to the developed world. However, and in spite of restrictions on labour mobility, flows from poor to rich countries have accelerated to explosive rates to the last 20 years — strong economic activity was, as always, the lure.

Income levels in the developing countries have risen in absolute terms over the last 30 years as real

income per capita more than doubled between 1965-95 in the developing world. However, in relative terms, the gap between incomes in the developing and the developed economies seem to have widened, in spite of several success stories. The gap grew in relative terms especially in the Middle East and North Africa region. Furthermore, 84 of the 108 countries classified as developing nations fall either in the lowest 20 per cent or highest 20 per cent in this classification in terms of income: the number of developing countries in the middle range decreased as countries joined either the upper or lowest quintile.

Thus, globalisation has had mixed results. It took place simultaneously as the gap between the rich and poor of the world increased, but this can be a matter of coincidence. In fact the technological revolution may have been behind the rise in disparity between the incomes of the rich and poor countries, therefore, the answer to our question is not cut and dry. However, we know countries, which were among the first to globalise, have benefited. Jordan should have been a fast mover, latecomers do not get the worms. And just in case globalisation has not been behind the gain to some of the developing countries (investment in physical and human capital has contributed 90 per cent of the income growth between 1960-92 and has been behind the technological revolution), Jordan should work more on attracting and facilitating inward investment flows and invest more in human capital.

Christmas, Ramadan: A good time to reflect on issues important to Christians, Muslims

By Thomas J. Fitzpatrick

RECENTLY I travelled to the West Bank and returned through the northern entrance. Upon coming through passport control a young security officer welcomed me and asked who I was. Happy to be back in Jordan I told him my name and spontaneously said I was a Jordanian. Upon reflection this had some significance for me. I have been in Jordan for 10 years and have not adjusted to certain aspects of the culture and have failed in Arabic. But I simply said I was a Jordanian. This recognition of a growth in my identity has given me a sense of freedom in talking openly about some issues that are very difficult for Jordanians. A number of years ago I wrote seven articles for Jordan Times, and then I stopped because I had not come to the point of talking freely about these issues that really interested me. I am now at that point.

This year Ramadan follows quickly after the beginning of Christmas for the various Christian communities. The two great religions in celebrating these feasts are both returning to roots of the respective faiths. Christmas calls Christians to remember that the life of God among us is a gift, and Muslims in fasting are renewed in the conviction that God alone counts. That these two seasons come together reminds us all that Jordan is a place of religiously minded people, most Muslims, some Christians, moving together in whatever direction Jordan is going. Here, I would like to list a few reflections I think are amongst the most important for Muslims and Christians in Jordan at this time:

1. Both Christians and Muslims share a responsibility before God to create a peaceful and just Jordan. Both Christians and Muslims in their faith are challenged to care for the poor. In the complex contemporary world this cannot just mean charitable handouts, but coming to grips with the roots of poverty and injustice. Muslims and Christians are challenged out of their respective faiths to work together toward this goal. When judgement comes, much will be asked not about how much we have enjoyed ourselves, or how much we have helped our individual families, but how much we have helped the poor people of Jordan and made the world we live in a better place, how much we

have created peace and justice for all. In Jordan this is an undisputed area of needed cooperation, between Muslims and Christians.

2. There is a further important need in Jordan for Muslims and Christians to reflect on their faith in the contemporary world. A few years ago I was shocked to speak with a medical student at Jordan University who could not accept the theory of evolution. In the meantime I have found that in general many people in Jordan reject evolution. I come from a background where evolution is taken as a cultural assumption. (It is possible to accept evolution and believe in God at the same time). The position of the medical student was shallow and naive. What was apparent was that the student was capable in medical questions, but was ignorant of religious thinking and theory of science. There is an enormous lack in Jordan in an integrated religious thinking. Jordan has taken on all the modern technological conveniences but has avoided thinking about what is the meaning of all this. There may be much in scientific theory that is incompatible with the religious and philosophical history in Jordan. But where is such an engaged thinking happening?

This is a monumental challenge for both Christians and Muslims. On this issue and many other issues Muslims and Christians come from the same cultural background and should be able to work fruitfully together.

Within the general lack of reflection in Jordan at the present time, communication is not only lacking on such issues as science and society, but on many human issues common to Christians and Muslims. For example people avoid talking about cancer, death, sex and even religion itself. Motivation for this avoidance is often fear and superstition. The result is that many very central human issues are not dealt with. Ignorance prevails, and adults remain as children with regard to basic human concerns. With regard to religious issues there is even an attitude amongst many that there is no need to discuss anything about the faith because discussion implies that there may be doubt, and since we have no doubts about our faith there is no need of discussion. One result of this is that the faith, whether of Christian or Muslim, remains superficial and incapable of dealing with

difficult contemporary issues. (Unless the whole gamut of human issues are openly discussed in Jordan I believe that in the near future — it may have already begun — there will be widespread and major disruption with the youth. Because communication with the whole world is becoming easy through reading and such innovations as the Internet, the young will interpret this failure of discussion as a deliberate attempt at keeping people ignorant. All the reasons given for avoiding discussion — one I have heard is that people will only be disturbed and confused by such discussions — will backfire.)

3. The third issue to be stressed is the question how Muslims and Christians in Jordan relate together on the level of faith itself. There is much in the papers about Muslim/Christian dialogue. His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan has certainly distinguished himself in the world in his interest in and cultivation of this religious dialogue. Representatives of the Vatican and other churches regularly attend meetings dedicated to various issues in such dialogue. But there is the feeling that these meetings are distant from the lives of people. Though necessary and helpful as these meetings are there is also necessary fruitful growth in communication on other levels of faith experience. What is missing in the relation between Muslims and Christians is faith contact in every day experience. I am not proposing that I would know how to meet this desire. But I am convinced that, in Jordan, Christians and Muslims as Christian and Muslim would gain very much from one another through shared experience of the faith — through shared experience of God.

That there is suspicion in the relations between Muslims and Christians is historically understandable. Hatred has been mutually expressed — hatred that has resulted in killing. There has been the idea shared by both Christians and Muslims that the opponent must be converted to be saved. And that killing "infidels" is justified since they live in falsehood condemned by God. If there was ever any justification of such a position, there is certainly no justification now. There is no justification for killing for the "truth" or killing because it is supposedly "God's will" (what kind of God is that?). The challenge for us all now is to convert

one another to our position (by any means, but especially by coercion) but to help one another become better what we profess to be. We have now the great historical challenge of mutual enrichment.

4. This brings us to perhaps the most important point in the relation between Christians and Muslims, and it is summed up in the question: Is the God the Christians worship and the God the Muslims worship the same God? It may be easier for the Muslims to say that this God is the same, because they recognise a development in revelation which includes Jesus and recognise the People of the Book. For some Christians, perhaps even many Christians, admitting that the God of the Muslims and God of the Christians is the same may be very difficult. But very deep movements are happening within Christianity. The Second Vatican Council in 1965 decreed that recognition is to be made of the "truth" present in other religions. This statement has many implications. One, that the Christians do not have all the truth or how could "truth" be present in other religions?; secondly, that if there is "truth" in other religions our God must be present since "God is truth." This is a very great advance, indeed! To recognise that we worship the same God makes it easier to respect one another and encourage one another in the faith we profess.

In this time of Ramadan and Christmas there is the opportunity for Christians and Muslims to reflect about the essence of their respective faiths and the relations between these two great religions. The challenges for reflection offered here are briefly stated in the following: 1. As Muslims and Christians we stand responsible together before God for peace and justice in Jordan; 2. We have the need to reflect out of a common religious background on the many and various needs of the people of Jordan; 3. We have to get beyond the desire to convert one another; the challenge is to enrich one another and help one another become better what we profess to be; 4. Much fruitful reflection would come from the general recognition that Christians and Muslims adore the same God.

The writer is director of The Jesuit Centre and director of the Bethlehem University Religious Education Programme in Amman.

Human Rights File Fearing the binational state

By Waleed M. Sadi

IT IS interesting to pause sometimes and reflect on how Israel would look some 50 on. Half a century away seems too long to visualise, but in "state age" it is just around the corner. The prompter to think or imagine so far ahead is Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's recent pronouncement that the West Bank is part of Eretz Israel and that if Israel wishes to be generous or benevolent with the Palestinians, it may give them functional control over one-third of their territories.

Former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres is dreading the thought of keeping so much Palestinian land because he fears that that would inevitably lead to a bi-national state. Ariel Sharon, Israel's minister of infrastructure appears ready to dismiss Peres' long term concerns because he probably believes he can force more Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza Strip by applying draconian measures against them. Sharon was fatally wrong during his Lebanese campaign in 1982 and he does seem to have learnt a bit from his past colossal misjudgements. It is simply flabbergasting that Sharon still carries so much political weight and exerts so much clout on Netanyahu despite his dismal record as a "statesman".

In retrospect, we don't have to wait for the prognosis of Peres to materialise to start viewing Israel as a binational state. Only through a myopic eye would one believe that Israel is not a Jewish state already. With more than one-quarter of its population made up of Palestinian Arabs, Israel is already a bi-national state. When Israel goes ahead with its master plan to incorporate the rest of former Palestine into its own territory, it would seal the future of Israel as a binational state. Give or take a few decades from now, the composition of the population of Israel would have changed so dramatically as to certainly make it a binational country. The "absorption" of even half of the two million Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is sure to lead to this conclusion.

According to this scenario, the Palestinian side would be better advised to decline any Israeli offer to hand over to them limited sovereignty powers over one-third or even one-half of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Palestinian question has been in the making over a century. It will be remade over the next century if the Palestinian people can articulate a long range perspective. Anything short of the return of 80 per cent of the West Bank including East Jerusalem should be rejected by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA).

Of course there is always the risk that the colonisation of the Palestinian areas by Jewish settlers would continue unabated should the peace process come to a complete halt. In return, the Palestinians should try to colonise pockets of lands within Israel itself. The Israeli Arabs' efforts to expand and consolidate their grip in the Galilee region could be funded by Arab investment. Arabs living in Jaffa, Haifa, Acre and above all Jerusalem could be also assisted financially to withstand the Israeli pressures to have them removed. Aided by an effective civil rights movement, the Arab population of Israel is destined not only to increase but also attain more and more political power and clout.

Since Netanyahu, Sharon and like-minded Israelis contend that the area between the sea and the Jordan River is too small to divide up and that Israel needs 20 kilometres along the Jordan Valley and another 20 or so kilometres beyond the former green line, then the stage is set for keeping the geographic unity of former Palestine intact. That is the very prescription to turn Israel into a binational country, something that the Palestinians have always asked for provided they are given their full civil and political rights.

As long as Jews yearn for Hebron and Jerusalem and Jericho, and the Palestinians yearn for Jaffa, Ramallah, Lidd, Haifa and Acre, then the stage is set for a situation that could easily culminate in the formation of a pluralistic country that is alien to the existing Israel.

LETTERS

Forced into a mould

To the editor:

IN LETTERS to the Editor Jordan Times, Nov.20-21 you printed a letter questioning the wisdom of erecting a wooden dome over the reception hall of the Umayyad palace on Jabal Al Qal'a in Amman, when there was still doubt among scholars as to whether the building was domed or not. In his reply (Jordan Times, Nov. 23), Dr. Ghazi Bisheh, Director-General of Antiquities and one of the world's most noted experts on the archaeology and architecture of the Umayyad period, denied that there was doubt, citing discoveries claimed by Dr. Antonio Almagro of window sills from the dome in place on the roof of the building, and voussours which apparently belonged to the corner squinches.

It is highly unlikely that Dr. Almagro has any such clear proof. There are many Roman architectural stones reused in the building, which could give the impression of being window sills, while the cornices which are known to have been in place in old photographs, and which would have been placed lower in the facade than any "window sills," all fell off at the beginning of the 20th century, possibly as a result of a British bombing raid against the Turks in the spring of 1918. Vouwsoir blocks found on the ground could have belonged to arches from a number of different buildings. At any rate these discoveries have not been published, so that it is impossible for the scientific world to judge the value of Dr. Almagro's claims.

It is true that the building does need to be roofed over, for the carved decoration has suffered badly from acid air pollution. However, it is the normal practice in international conservation architecture, where there is some doubt about the original form of the building, to carry out the protection works in a style which is obviously different from the original architecture, so that visitors are not confused. In this case the centre of the building should have been covered with a clear plastic or glass roof, letting in plenty of light. It is not usual for an architect to impose one particular reconstruction hypothesis, when it is known that alternatives exist.

In my personal opinion there is not the slightest doubt that the building was originally intended to be open in the centre. The niched facades are a beautiful imitation of the Iraqi style to be seen in the facades of the palace of Taqi Kisa at Ctesiphon. If they were protected from the weather, the extensive decorations here would have been executed in a more delicate material such as painted or carved plaster, rather than the tough stone carving that was actually done. It seems a pity that this wonderful building, evocative of the unity of the Arab World, between east and west, between Iraq and Jordan, should be forced into a uniquely Western mould by the addition of a Byzantine style dome by the Spanish architects.

Alastair Northedge,
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Lebanese economic revival hit by debt, currency crisis

BEIRUT (AFP) — Lebanon's economic growth slowed this year as the country grappled with ballooning debt, a shaky currency and widespread corruption, economists say. But the government hopes that a recent \$600 million shot in the arm from Saudi Arabia will help put the country back on sound financial footing.

Although no official statistics are available, experts estimate that gross domestic product (GDP) this year grew by no more than 3.5 per cent compared with an estimated average 7.5 per cent from 1992 to 1995.

The growth rate is insufficient to "improve the buying power of families, augment businesses' ability to self-finance (new projects), or readjust public finances," Freddie Baz, an advisor with Audi Bank, told AFP.

Mr. Baz said growth is being stifled by growing public debt, a "wait-and-see" attitude across the private sector, except in banking, and the inefficiency of public officials.

One place money is being tied up as purchasing power falls off is in

Lebanon's housing industry, where construction mushroomed in recent years.

There has been "a two-year crisis in the building sector which has swallowed up \$8 billion by producing an unsold stock of 70,000 units," Antoine Shueiri of the Association of Lebanese Banks said.

Far more money is tied up in the government's ballooning debt service payments as it has borrowed billions to finance reconstruction following the 1970-1995 civil war.

Public debt is estimated at between \$13.5 billion and \$15 billion, around five times the level when Prime Minister Rafic Hariri's government launched the rebuilding effort in 1992.

According to recent figures, the government's expenditures exceeded revenues by 60 per cent this year as of October, and Lebanon's public debt now stands at some 85 per cent of GDP.

Mr. Shueiri said debt-servicing charges now make up "half the budget deficit, instead of the planned level of 37 per cent."

The government this month approved a plan designed to reduce servicing costs by converting \$2 billion of internal liabilities into foreign currencies to take advantage of lower interest rates on dollars or francs.

But to some experts, the government is only now realising the side-effects of its fiscal stabilisation policies, which were based on high domestic interest rates of around 17 to 19 per cent to support the national currency.

"Stabilisation, necessary in a country which imports 90 per cent of its needs, has instead aggravated the internal debt," said Mr. Shueiri.

He said high rates have also had the unwanted effect of drawing too much money into the banking sector, helping slow economic activity further.

As Lebanon's continuing budget deficit and low growth rate puts pressure on the pound, some experts predict the currency will be devalued despite Beirut's intervention on money markets to defend it.

Roy Badaro of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Beirut predicted a "45 per cent devaluation of the pound" in the future, saying the current rate of 1,532 pounds to the dollar was unrealistic.

But Saudi Arabia recently deposited \$600 million with the Lebanese central bank in a move Mr. Hariri said should help Lebanon

overcome its financial problems and help strengthen the currency.

Protecting the pound from attacks in the region's turbulent currency markets cost the central bank more than two billion pounds in 1997, or more than half its total foreign currency reserves, according to banking officials.

The shaky currency has weakened foreign investors' confidence in the country's treasury bonds, prompting the central bank to raise the coupon by five basis points to lure subscribers.

Confidence in the pound is also weakening among ordinary Lebanese, with the percentage of savers keeping their money in dollars rather than pounds up from 50 per cent in mid-1997 to 65 per cent by the end of November.

Experts also point to official corruption as a major reason the huge sums of money the government borrowed for reconstruction have not done more to boost productivity.

"Public contracts have profited Lebanon's leaders, their Syrian tutors, a handful of local entrepreneurs, Western firms, and an essentially Syrian workforce," a foreign financial expert said.

"A veritable liquidity crisis is shaking Lebanon," the expert said, while the government has little chance of boosting revenues due to widespread tax evasion.

Israel seen investing 15b in infrastructure

TEL AVIV (R) — Israel will invest some \$15 billion in infrastructure projects over the next five years, economists at Israel Discount Bank's underwriting arm estimated in a report released Sunday.

Discount analyst Alon Tal said the estimate for investment reflected expectations for real economic growth.

About \$8 billion of the total will be targeted at developing Israel's electricity grid. Discount estimated demand would grow at an annual rate of 4.2 per cent over the five years, slowing from an eight per cent pace over the previous five years.

The energy sector, the report said, was slowly undergoing structural reforms that would reduce government involvement and reduce the power of monopolies.

It said development of the petrol distribution sector would depend on the removal of obstacles for obtaining licences. Once this happened, discount estimated, \$75 million would be invested over the short term in setting up 100 filling stations and another \$150 million over the long term.

The petrol and gas sector is supplied exclusively by Oil Refineries Ltd., a monopoly with refineries located in Ashdod and Haifa. The monopoly refines 13 million tonnes of crude oil to meet demand of nine to 12 million tonnes a year.

Discount said that gas for industry and cooking was sometimes in short supply as the company tried to optimise its profits. The report said the sector could be opened for competition by splitting up the two refineries.

Plans are under way to import natural gas to Israel, two thirds of which will be used by state-owned Israel Electric Corp. The most realistic option is importing the gas from Egypt via an undersea pipeline that would cost an estimated \$200 million, Discount said.

About \$3.7 billion will be invested in transportation, including about \$500 million in expanding the rail network. A plan for the coming three years includes \$1.3 billion for investment in roads, the report said.

The government has earmarked \$700 million to expand Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion International Airport to raise capacity to 16 million passengers a year from the current seven million.

Israel will invest about \$1 billion in expanding the ports of Haifa and Ashdod and developing the port of Eilat, Israel's ports serve about 7,000 ships a year and long waits at the ports result in losses of \$33 million a year, Discount said.

About \$1.5 billion will be invested in water projects, half to expand the supply of drinking water and half for plants to treat sewage.

Iran raises import duties to 10 per cent to protect local good

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran has decided to double duties on a range of imports to 10 per cent to protect local goods amid a crisis over declining non-oil exports.

Trade Minister Mohammad Chaharmadani said the increase from the current rate of 4.2 per cent was aimed at "protecting national production ahead of imports."

However, the tax increase "does not concern basic products, raw materials for industry and pharmaceutical production," the minister said, the official IRNA news agency reported.

Iran is running a large trade surplus with total

exports at \$22.5 billion against imports of \$15 billion, but non-oil exports of goods such as pistachio nuts, carpets and caviar and some industrial products are suffering.

"The country has serious problems with non-oil exports and the figures are alarming," said Mr. Chaharmadani, without elaborating.

Iran is also facing a budget crisis, with the deficit expected to hit one billion dollars in the Iranian calendar year ending in March because of lower-than-expected oil revenues, government officials said.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR MONDAY, DECEMBER 29, 1997

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) There's something serious to be taken care of at home — a major renovation or a major housecleaning, or both. Are you entertaining soon? Maybe you can get some friends to come over and help. You can have a party while you're getting ready for the party.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You need to spend more time reading, learning, cramming information into your brain. You have more than enough questions. What you need are answers. The time you spend studying today will show up in money saved, and it won't take long for that to materialise.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) There's money coming in, and this is a good day for hoarding. So gather it, count it, sort it into piles. Call up people who owe you money and lean on them. If you do it now, it won't look so bad. If you wait until later in the month, you'll never be able to get away with it.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) An older person wants to teach you something, but you're just not interested. That's OK. Be nice, don't take anything personally. Tonight, your partner has some good advice. In fact, everybody has good advice today. You'd be wise to be open to it.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Some tongue-tied person wants you to do something, but won't tell you what it is. If you're really self-absorbed, you're missing the non-verbal hints. Figure out what he or she needs and see if you can address the problem. This will take tact, but it should be interesting.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) There's some sort of hassle at home. Part of the solution is to delegate. If you're having the dinner at your house, let the others bring things, too. The overall objective here is to get others involved. The more the merrier, and the less work there is for you. That's not cheating.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Go along with the demands of someone in authority, even if this is not your favourite person to be with. In other words, put everything you've got into making your leader look good. The more you do that, the more he or she will relax — and the easier your life gets. This is a win-win situation, see?

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Forces beyond your control push you to learn something new. You may have to go to college to do so, or travel to a distant land. At any rate, it's beyond anything you've ever tried before. There's no point in fighting it. Just follow the impulse. It'll work out fine.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You could be pouring your money into savings, or investing it. More likely, you're simply buying everything in sight. You've probably just noticed the Christmas season is upon us and you want to buy gifts. Well, that's not such a bad idea. Better late than never.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Your mate is under a bit of pressure. You can help by empowering. To do this, focus attention on him or her. Provide what's required without being asked. Remember the little things the person likes. Do everything you can to make life roll along smoothly. It'll be fun.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) There's work to do and you get to do it. You'd rather than spend your day in front of a computer. Instead, you're cooking or cleaning or doing some other hands-on chore. This is not your area of expertise, but it certainly won't hurt you to learn. And there's no point in trying to avoid it.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Your sweetheart's under pressure again. Calming and gentle words are always a big help. So is lending a shoulder to cry on. You might have to take over some of the chores, but that's no problem. If the job's really big, try to get a couple friends to help.

Birthstone of December: Turquoise — Zircon

Dead Sea Raft Race



ON THE OCCASION of His Majesty King Hussein's Birthday, the Marriott Hotel has organised and sponsored a charity raft race at the Dead Sea. Nine teams participated. All proceedings raised went to "Al Hussein Society" for the rehabilitation and education of physically handicapped.

During the luncheon banquet held at the hotel, Mr. Martin Standen, General Manager, and Mr. Rami Safadi, Director of Sales and Marketing, presented a cheque of JD5,000 to Her Royal Highness Princess Majida Ra'ed, the Honorary Chairman of the society.

* Participants were:

- The American Embassy
- The British Embassy
- The U.S. Air Force
- Seimens
- Amin Kassar
- Tetrapak
- Fine Hygienic Paper
- Universal Wood Manufacturers
- Marriott Hotel (Champions)

JOB OPPORTUNITY ACCOUNTANT

A leading Investment Company seeks, an Accountant for immediate employment. Applicants should satisfy the following criteria:

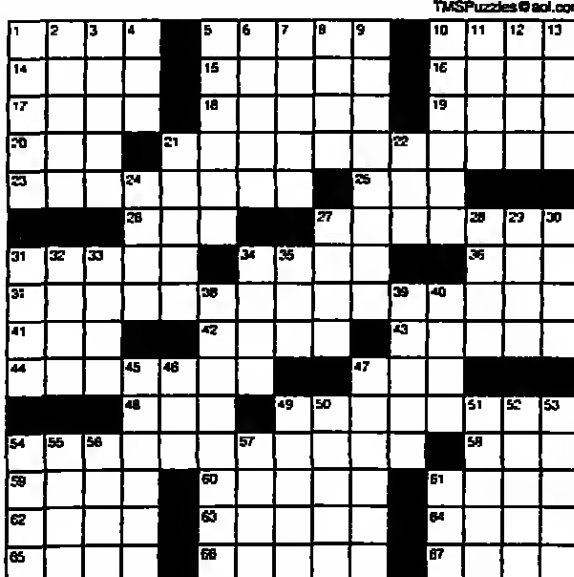
- Graduate in Commerce/Accounting from a reputed university;
- Previous experience as Accountant in a large organisation;
- Detailed working knowledge of MS Excel is a must;
- Familiar with all banking transactions;
- Preference will be given to Omani candidates who meet the above criteria.

Eligible candidates should send their applications along with a recent passport size photograph and copies of the testimonials within 10 days to:

The Administration Manager, P.O. Box 2205, Ruwi, Postal Code 112, Sultanate of Oman.

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

- ACROSS**
- 1 Chimed in
 - 5 Open-mouthed
 - 10 Medical pers.
 - 14 Star of "Paper Lion"
 - 15 Chorus section
 - 16 Spiny African plant
 - 17 Easter flower
 - 18 Settle down for the night
 - 19 Agitate
 - 20 Lincoln or Burrows
 - 21 Lalar
 - 23 Give out
 - 25 Tarzan Ron
 - 26 Emma's twins?
 - 27 Blue-veined cheese
 - 31 Very large in scale
 - 34 Spumante
 - 36 12/24 or 12/31, for example
 - 37 Soon
 - 41 "Blame it on"
 - 42 Grace ending
 - 43 Explosive substance
 - 44 Coldhearted
 - 47 Coop layer
 - 48 Alternative to 8
 - 49 Frogs and tilman
 - 54 Paul I
 - 58 Grouped merchandise
 - 59 Kept back
 - 60 Tire pattern
 - 61 Verdi opera
 - 62 Manufacture
 - 63 Bring joy
 - 64 Get out of bed
 - 65 Winter glider
 - 66 Make road repairs
 - 67 Anglo-Saxon kingdom

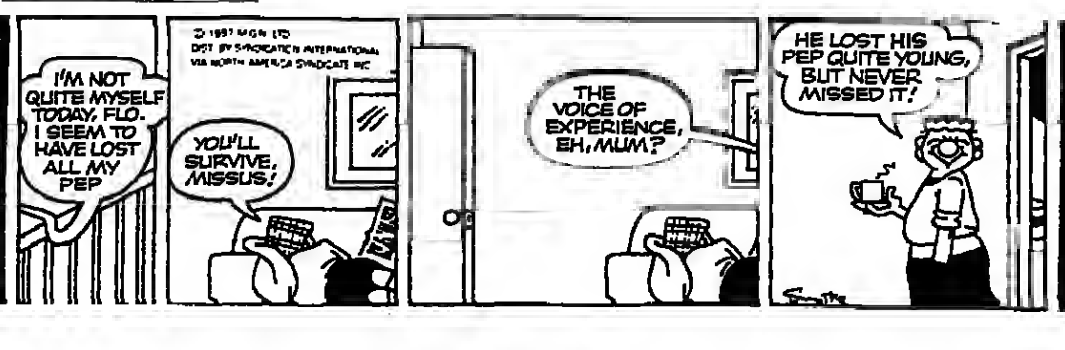


- By Diane C. Baldwin
Columbia, MD
- DOWN**
- 1 First course
 - 2 Mystery story?
 - 3 Runs in neutral
 - 4 Night follower
 - 5 Conland and Spelling
 - 8 Has the look of love
 - 9 Make amends
 - 10 Appointment
 - 9 Having a love of beauty
 - 10 Strawberry of the outfield
 - 11 Hedgepodge
 - 12 Soft drink flavor
 - 13 Ranked player
 - 21 Exit split
 - 22 Inventor Whitney
 - 24 South American nation
 - 27 British submarine gun
 - 28 Boy Scouts' shelter
 - 30 Stout's Wolfe
 - 31 Painter Chagall
 - 32 "Elsa's Dream," e.g.
 - 33 Unenthusiastic
 - 34 SS dispensers
 - 35 H. Rider Haggard novel
 - 38 Carrie to Debbie
 - 39 Shaq or Tatum
 - 40 Ice expense
 - 45 Added fat
 - 46 Not at home
 - 47 Container
 - 49 Preview the answers
 - 50 Range rope
 - 51 Privileged few
 - 52 "The Thinker" sculptor
 - 53 Be taken aback
 - 54 Units of resistance
 - 55 Call meal
 - 56 Actress Sommer
 - 57 Stanley Gardner
 - 61 Inquire

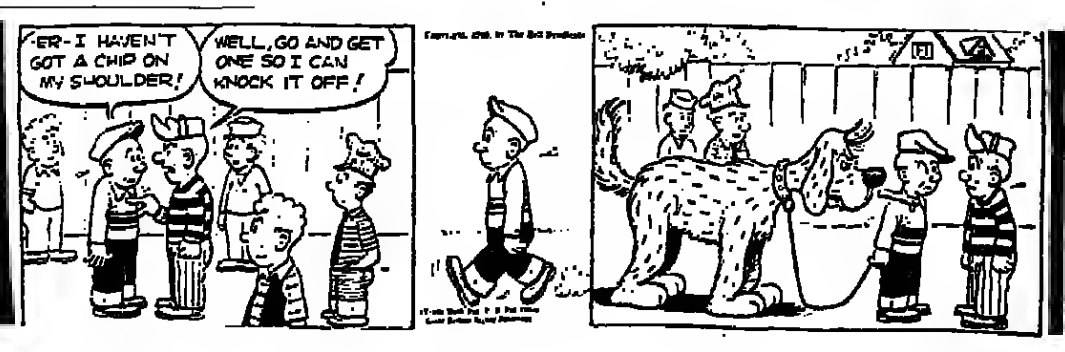
Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



"That's my old girlfriend, Judy. She got married to another guy, so I broke up with her."

JUMBLE.

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

RYTAR

LUNCE

EMBACE

DOURNA

Print answer here: _____

Yesterday's Jumbles: YACHT TRIPE EQUITY INFECT

Answer: This can be tough when the meat is tender

THE PRICE

(Answers tomorrow)

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

WHAT THE GROCER GOT WHEN HE LOWERED THE PRICE ON DETERGENT.

Print answer here: _____

Yesterday's Jumbles: YACHT TRIPE EQUITY INFECT

Answer: This can be tough when the meat is tender

THE PRICE

(Answers tomorrow)

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

WHAT THE GROCER GOT WHEN HE LOWERED THE PRICE ON DETERGENT.

Print answer here: _____

Fax: 011 000
Mobile: 079/30001

Daily Business Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Cabinet exempts specialised export firms from paying income, social service taxes

JORDANIAN PUBLIC shareholding companies which promote, market and export national products and locally-manufactured goods in outside markets will be exempt from paying income and social service tax, according to a Cabinet decision. The companies should have a capital not less than JD2 million and the exemption from taxes cover the profits generated from operations inside or outside Jordan.

To benefit from the tax exemption, the concerned companies should purchase the product from the local manufacturer or producer. The companies should then market and export the product in outside markets and not act as an intermediary entity operating on commission basis. (Al Ra'i).

JTC to put new telephone exchange in Abdali into operation next month

THE NEW Abdali telephone exchange that has a capacity of 40,000 numbers will be put into operation at the end of next month, Jordan Telecommunications Company (JTC) Board Chairman Walid Dweik has said. He added that directly following such a step, the company will start meeting the requests of the public to have telephone services.

According to Mr. Dweik, this vital project comes after the company has put into operation during the past two months the new telephone exchanges at Tareq, Al Rashid and Abdoun areas. He indicated that the new exchange at Abdali and the others mentioned earlier are advanced ones that were carried out within the national investment programme in the sphere of telecommunications.

The chairman revealed that preparations are underway now to operate the new Abdali telephone exchange which will replace one of the two ones currently being used. The exchange to be replaced has a capacity of 17,000 numbers which start with the numbers 66 and 67.

"After completing the transfers on the Tareq and Al Rashid telephone exchanges the numbers on the Abdali exchange will be changed to become in seven digits by adding the number 5 to the numbers of current subscribers," he said.

"The additional number (5) will be a comprehensive of all subscribers except some cases which will be announced in the media at a later date," he concluded. (Al Ra'i).

Royal Jordanian boosts sales to \$322m in ten months

By Ghalia Alul
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A senior official of the debt-ridden Royal Jordanian (RJ) said Sunday the airline posted total sales of \$322.2 million in the first ten months of 1997 — a four per cent increase on last year's figures.

But Majdi Sabri, the airline's vice president for commercial activities, did not disclose the expected net operational profit.

He was addressing the opening session of a sales and marketing meeting for Gulf, Middle East and North Africa managers.

Ghada Badr, RJ deputy general manager for planning, revealed that in the three areas of operation the airline generated a \$70.7 million income this year.

"RJ hopes the three regions will increase the revenue to \$77.5 million next year," she said.

The revenue represented around 27 per cent of the airline's total income.

The meeting also reviewed long-delayed

plans to gradually privatise RJ by turning it into a company that operates on commercial basis after legal and financial restructuring of the airline.

Officials said the process would take at least two years. The Cabinet approved plans for a major restructuring of the airline in September — an important step to sell a stake to a global strategic investor.

Plans to privatise the airline, saddled with debts of over \$846 million mainly from aircraft leases, were first floated in 1988 but held back due to a host of bureaucratic and financial reasons.

The financial and legal restructuring of the airline will help put it on a more profitable and a sounder administrative level before it can operate on commercial basis. RJ operations are currently heavily subsidised by the government.

The World Bank is advising the government on how to restructure the airline and to set terms of reference for the project.

Nader Dahabi, RJ Presi-

dent and Chief Executive Officer, said the airline decided to suspend operations to Canada last year because of the route's poor performance. This, he said, helped RJ reduce expenditures in some areas and increase them on more profitable routes.

"All these procedures will eventually transform RJ into a shareholding company which will be able to tolerate old debts and losses," he said.

Mr. Dahabi added that a subsidiary company will eventually be established to handle regular flights. Other separate companies, he indicated, will be formed to take care of catering, duty free shops, ground services and other facilities.

Dr. Sabri said the airline will increase the number of flights to Kuwait next summer to cope with an increase in demand. The airline currently operates two flights a week to the emirate which has a sizeable community of Jordanian and Palestinian expatriates.

He said RJ was studying

the possibility of operating regular flights to Tehran to encourage religious tourism to Jordan and boost trade and business links. The airline halted operations to Tehran shortly after the Islamic revolution in 1979.

Mr. Dahabi said the Amman meeting will evaluate the performance of RJ offices in the three regions mentioned earlier to come up with a strategy to confront possible losses in RJ revenue from South East Asian countries because of the devaluation in their local currencies. The countries are currently suffering from a dire financial and economic crisis.

Dr. Sabri said RJ carried a total of 1.38 million passengers between January and end of October and lifted 71,000 tonnes of cargo during the same period.

He also discussed plans to replace RJ's ageing TriStar aircraft operating on long haul routes with a new generation of European Airbus as part of efforts to modernise the airline's fleet and boost its global network.

Last summer, RJ paid

the final instalment on its five TriStar aircraft leased for the past 10 years from Banque Indosuez.

Officials said earlier the \$60 million TriStars were the only ones owned by RJ which has a fleet of 17 aircraft.

Mr. Dahabi also urged delegates to exert efforts to face growing air transport competition worldwide. He said new airline companies will soon start operations to Amman, thus increasing competition.

He said political uncertainty in the Middle East since the election of Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in May 1995 had discouraged many tourists from coming to the area.

Many visitors flocked to the region after Jordan and the Palestinians signed peace deals with Israel in 1993 and 1994.

RJ is scheduled to hold its annual conference for regional managers in May to review and evaluate its performance and future marketing and operational plans.

Cabinet approves projects under debt swap deal with France

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Council of Ministers has approved two projects in line with a debt swap agreement the Kingdom has signed with

France in 1994. A Finance Ministry official said Sunday.

The agreement, which stipulates a rate of redemption of 47 per cent of 325 million French francs (FF) of debt, allows the Kingdom

to exchange the remaining amount (FF 172m) for foreign investments in the Kingdom instead of direct debt repayment, said Odeh Swiss, director of the finance department at the ministry.

The Finance Ministry official told the Jordan Times that the first project includes the establishment of a mall centre in Jordan with \$24.5 million of which foreign investment would amount to \$6 million. The other ven-

ture is a chemical project.

He emphasised that the two projects will help in reducing the debt burden by \$12.1 million. They will also create hundreds of jobs in the country, Mr. Swiss said.

Following the debt swap agreement, a committee was formed. The committee includes officials from the ministries of finance, trade and industry, Central Bank and the Investment Promotion Corporation would study foreign investments in the country.

Mr. Swiss explained that once a project is approved by the French Debt Swap Committee (FDSC), any foreign investor will negotiate with the French government a discount rate as an incentive for the principal investment amount that must be paid.

Then the investor will present the Jordanian authorities with a letter from the French government. Such a letter will authorise Jordan to reimburse the investor the amount in Jordanian dinars which will be used to set up the project in the Kingdom.

"This attitude will encourage foreign investors to come to Jordan and enhance their confidence in our economy," added Mr. Swiss.

He said that the criteria for approving foreign investment in line with this agreement, is that it "should bring new technology to the country, create new job opportunities and increase the Kingdom's export ability."

Mr. Swiss said that the debt swap agreement with France has helped in reducing the Kingdom's foreign debt burden, increasing French investments, enhancing the balance of payment and increasing the country's foreign reserves.

Mr. Swiss emphasised that the FDSC committee is on the verge of approving a new joint industrial venture, where foreign investment accounts to \$4 million. The new project will employ 60 Jordanians, he added.

REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	1.0000	1.7730	0.5986	1.4326	130.30	1.4333	1741.76	1.9375	6.9310
DE Mark	0.5640	1.0000	0.3375	0.8080	73.49	0.8082	982.10	1.1267	3.3446
GB Sterling	1.6705	2.9640	1.0000	2.3598	216.15	2.3943	2908.69	3.3368	9.9077
CH Franc	0.6980	1.2367	0.4175	1.0000	90.93	0.9998	1214.55	1.3838	4.1371
JP Yen	0.0077	1.3697	0.4690	1.0988	1.0000	1.0992	13.35	153.18	4.5483
CA Dollar	0.6877	1.2361	0.4171	0.9888	1.10	1.0000	1214.36	1.3927	4.1351
IT Lira	0.0008	1.0174	0.3434	0.8222	1338.33	0.8224	1.0000	11.46	3.4032
NL Guilder	0.5006	88.72	0.2995	71.71	65.19	0.7172	871.68	1.0000	2.9677
FR Franc	0.1686	0.2985	0.1005	24.1524	21.95	0.2418	33.58	33.5800	1.0000

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	1.0000	0.7080	3.7508	0.3770	3.6400	0.3045	3.6724	1522.50	3.3960
Jordan Dinar	1.4124	1.0000	6.2876	0.5325	6.1412	0.4301	6.1870	2150.42	4.7952
Saudi Riyal	0.2666	0.1888	1.0000	0.1005	0.97	0.0812	0.98	405.94	0.9052
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8780	9.3485	1.0000	8.66	0.8077	9.74	4038.48	9.0063
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1945	1.0304	1.0000	0.0037	1.01	418.27	0.9327	0.9327
Kuwait Dinar	3.2842	2.3252	12.3176	1.2381	11.95	1.0000	12.06	5000.16	0.9327
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1928	1.0213	1.0000	0.9912	0.0823	1.00	414.58	0.9245
Lebanese L1000	0.86	0.4650	2.4634	0.2476	2.3908	0.2000	2.4121	1.0000	2.2298
Egyptian	0.2948	0.2085	1.1047	0.1110	1.0722	0.0897	1.0617	448.45	1.0000

Mid-East Currencies									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	SA Riyal	AE Dirham	KW Dinar	BH Dinar
US Dollar	1.0000	1.7730	0.5986	1.4326	130.30	1.4333	1741.76	1.9375	6.9310
DE Mark	0.5640	1.0000	0.3375	0.8080	73.49	0.8082	982.10	1.1267	3.3446
GB Sterling	1.6705	2.9640	1.0000	2.3598	216.15	2.3943	2908.69	3.3368	9.9077
CH Franc	0.6980	1.2367	0.4175	1.0000	90.93	0.9998	1214.55	1.3838	4.1371
JP Yen	0.0077	1.3697	0.4690	1.0988	1.0000	1.0992	13.35	153.18	4.5483
CA Dollar	0.6877	1.2361	0.4171	0.9888	1.10	1.0000	1214.36	1.3927	4.1351
IT Lira	0.0008	1.0174	0.3434	0.8222	1338.33	0.8224	1.0000	11.46	3.4032
NL Guilder	0.5006	88.72	0.2995	71.71	65.19	0.7172	871.68	1.0000	2.9677
FR Franc	0.1686	0.2985	0.1005	24.1524	21.95	0.2418	33.58	33.5800	1.0000

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)									
Currency	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	9 Months	1 Year	Period	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months
USD	6.25	6.58	6.78	6.81	6.84	1 Month	6.25	6.58	6.78
GBP	7.38	7.58	7.62	7.62	7.62	3 Month	7.38	7.58	7.62
JPY	1.43	0.26	0.25	0.25	0.31	6 Month	1.43	0.26	0.25
DEM	3.58	3.62	3.72	3.81	3.91	9 Month	3.58	3.62	3.72
FRF	3.48	3.54	3.66	3.71	3.80	1 Year	3.48	3.54	3.66
CHF	1.25	1.38	1.50	1.56	1.65		1.25	1.38	1.50
ITL	5.81	5.72	6.00	6.19	5.00		5.81	5.72	6.00

JOD Cross Rates									
Currency	Buy	Sell	Period	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	9 Months	1 Year	Period
US Dollar	0.708	0.710	1 Month	0.708	0.710	0.710	0.710	0.710	1 Month
GB Sterling	1.1857	1.1918	3 Month	1.1857	1.1918	1.1918	1.1918	1.1918	3 Month
DE Mark	0.3989	0.4008	6 Month	0.3989	0.4008	0.4008	0.4008	0.4008	6 Month
CH Franc	0.4931	0.4956	9 Month	0.4931	0.4956	0.4956	0.4956	0.4956	9 Month
FR Franc	0.1182	0.1198	1 Year	0.1182	0.1198	0.1198	0.1198	0.1198	1 Year
JP Yen	0.5424	0.5451		0.5424	0.5451	0.5451	0.5451	0.5451	
NL Guilder	0.354	0.3568		0.354	0.3568	0.3568	0.3568	0.3568	
IT Lira	0.408	0.408		0.408	0.408	0.408	0.408	0.408	

JORDAN FINANCIAL MARKET											
HOUSING BANK CENTER - AMMAN - JORDAN											
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607175											
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SUNDAY 28/12/1997											
PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / R	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE	
BANK SECTOR TOTALS											
246,000	249,000	ANAB BANK	14.9	1.23	12	4600	1503760	322.00	324.00	2.00	
N	2,340	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	2	0.00	19	12692	22523	1.78	1.77	-01	
S	5,800	CALIN ANBAR BANK	7.2	4.29	2	750	2625	3.40	3.50	10	
2,580	1,780	BANK OF JORDAN	5.6	0.00	3	1100	1936	1.85	1.76	-09	
S	2,680	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	10.3	6.11	4	2350	3897	1.71	1.71	-	
S	4,180	JOR. INVEST. BANK	10.6	0.00	7	474	933	1.99	1.99	-	
980	620	JOR. GULF BANK	3.9	10.61	13	12750	8390	6.65	6.65	-01	
S	4,050	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	12.3	3.97	30	12678	30915	2.45	2.42	-03	
1,530	1,080	JOR. INV. FIN. BANK	15.4	0.00	1	1000	1100	1.11	1.10	-01	
S	3,900	JOR. INV. FIN. BANK	15.4	0.00	1	150	360	2.45	2.40	-05	
S	4,990	ANAB BANKING CO.	21.3	0.00	2	400	1242	3.10	2.95	-15	
BANK SECTOR TOTALS											
2,100		1,990	JOR. PREMIER INST.	5.6	7.58	2	1000	1970	1.95	1.98	03
S	6,170	3,150	ALRAIS AL-ARABI	16.9	0.00	3	2250	8033	3.40	3.57	17
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS											
2,850		1,550	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	9.3	5.21	7	10978	21096	1.92	1.92	-
S	8,450	7,900	JOR. HOTEL TOURISM	12.0	1.31	1	500	4200	8.00	8.40	40
S	3,410	2,450	BEHNI MINERALS	37.1	4.60	1	515	1746	3.37	3.39	02
S	7,500	3,750	VEHLS. OWNERS FED.	10.5	3.65	1	150	720	4.57	4.80	23
1	6,100	3,550	ANAB INTL. HOTELS	15.2	4.04	2	12800	63085	4.71	4.95	24
1	1,010	1,010	JOR. SUPPLY CHAIN	14.1	5.88	1	1000	235	4.77	4.77	05
S	760	470	JORDAN INTL. TRAD.	24.1	0.00	9	6000	2830	4.97	4.97	02
S	1,680	1,150	POD. EAST HOTELS	19.2	0.00	5	2450	3080	1.25	1.26	01
S	4,020	2,890	JOR. EASTERN DEV. CO.	10.2	0.00	6	1750	5818	3.85	3.90	05
S	900	500	JOR. EASTERN DEV. CO.	10.2	0.00	1	187	187	1.96	1.96	01
S	2,230	1,630	UNITED CO.	8.0	6.51	4	16300	27647	1.69	1.69	-
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS											
1,160		930	ATTARQUES	9	0.00	2	1250	1450	1.16	1.16	-
S	4,450	2,750	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	20.2	3.67	45	17150	54838	2.97	3.00	03
S	1,140	1,050	JOR. PRIVATE KINGS	2.9	2.12	12	2125	7654	3.00	3.72	72
S	1,410	1,040	WOOLLEN INDUSTRIES	10.0	8.70	3	600	700	1.11	1.15	04
S	2,890	1,330	INDUSTRIAL CORP. JORD.	9	0.00	3	91	125	1.42	1.40	02
S	5,800	3,000	JOR. INVESTED FUND	11.3	2.66	26	1780	2600	6.95	7.00	05
S	7,400	3,440	ANAB PHARM. MANF.	11.6	4.74	46	11729	49909	4.15	4.22	07
S	1,650	1,020	JOR. PIPES MANF.	15.6	5.97	1	100	134	1.34	1.34	-
S	1,800	1,000	GENERAL RECKING	10.0	0.00	9	2250	4918	4.15	4.25	10
S	8,400	5,000	ANAB CHEM.	23.8	3.87	1	100	776	7.39	7.76	37
S	6,000	4,000	DAR ALDONIA DV. LIV.	13.9	4.40	15	5255	29827	5.65	5.68	03
S	1,650	450	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	9.5	0.00	3	1750	788	4.6	4.5	01
S	3,490	1,850	GENERAL INVESTMENT	11.0	2.81	1	641	247	2.59	2.59	12
S	730	510	NATIONAL INDS.	9	0.00	5	11980	7063	4.40	4.58	02
S	1,150	400	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	3	4500	1770	4.0	4.0	-
S	5,290	4,100	JOR. CHEM. LUMIN.	22.6	0.00	30	3200	3200	5.29	5.55	26
S	480	530	JOR. ROCKWELL INDS.	9	0.00	1	200	110	56	55	01
S	3,000	1,160	NATL. CABLE WIRE, NFAC	31.5	0.00	7	3250	3988	1.25	1.31	06
S	1,090	530	JOR. SULPHUR-CHEM	9	0.00	5	1250	3793	59	57	02
S	1,110	500	KAWTAR INDS.	57.2	0.00	1	1200	69	59	57	02
S	1,800	520	UNIV. FODM. INDS.	9	26	19	13900	11573	85	83	02
S	1,410	590	JOR. INDS. RESOURCES	13.5	12.82	46	48000	37636	81	78	03
S	1,370	620	UNION TRADING	4.4	0.00	1	430	2940	1.21	1.20	-01
S	1,970	810	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	3.3	0.00	3	2750	2448	89	89	-
S	1,970	1,340	EL -SAY RAYED WEAR	52.4	0.00	13	5750	8531	1.56	1.49	07
S	2,310	1,080	UNION TRADING	4.4	0.00	5	2450	2940	1.21	1.20	-01
S	1,200	860	UNION CH. & VEG.	45.9	0.00	7	11250	11363	96	101	05
S	1,840	570	HIO. EAST COMPLEX	7.4	16.67	14	9100	5458	61	60	01
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS											
1,160		930	ATTARQUES	9	0.00	2	1250	1450	1.16	1.16	-
4,450		2,750	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	20.2	3.67	45	17150	54838	2.97	3.00	03
1,140		1,050	JOR. PRIVATE KINGS	2.9	2.12	12	2125	7654	3.00	3.72	72
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1,970		810	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	3.3	0.00	3	2750	2448	89	89	-
1,970		1,340	EL -SAY RAYED WEAR	52.4	0.00	13	5750	8531	1.56	1.49	07
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Vikings rally to topple Giants

EAST RUTHERFORD, (AFP) — In one of the National Football League's most remarkable playoff rallies, Minnesota scored 10 points in the last 90 seconds to beat the New York Giants 23-22 Saturday.

Randall Cunningham led Minnesota back from a 16-point half-time deficit to a stunning upset, decided on Eddie Murray's 24-yard field goal with 10 seconds remaining here in cold and snowy conditions.

"We over gave up," said Minnesota coach Dennis Green, a first-time playoff winner after five prior losses. "We played all the way. We knew we could win."

The Vikings advanced to an American football quarter-final match next weekend at San Francisco. The 49ers had a first-round bye.

No team had come back to win from a deficit of more than two touchdowns in an NFL playoff game since Dallas in 1972.

"That's a very disappointing loss for us, it's a very bitter pill to swallow," said first-year Giants coach Jim Fassel. "I've got to band it to the Vikings. They keep fighting on every play."

Vikings quarterback Randall Cunningham burlled a 30-yard touchdown pass to Jake Reed with 90 seconds remaining, pulling the Vikings within 22-20, and setting the stage for the key play of the game.

Needing to retain possession to have a hope of winning, Minnesota tried an on-side kick.

"In this game you have to have a little fortune," said Green. "I don't think (the on-side kick) was a lucky play. We prepare that every week."

New York's Chris Calloway could have sealed a victory by holding onto the football, but he fumbled and Chris Walsb recovered for Minnesota to give the Vikings possession once again.

"We practice that twice a week, but that's the first time that we recovered one," said Walsh. "Calloway thought he could short-bop it but it skidded on the ground. It was a free-for-all and I came up with it."

A dejected Calloway lamented a bounce of the ball off soggy sod.

"I knew the ground was wet and it would skid and go fast," said Calloway. "At

the last minute it popped up. I should have had it."

Cunningham connected with Cris Carter on a 20-yard pass and Robert Smith ran 16 yards to the Giants' 5-yard line, setting the stage for Murray's winning field goal.

The Vikings appeared ready to set an NFL playoff futility record with their seventh consecutive playoff loss.

New York's Brad Daluiso kicked his playoff record fifth field goal, a 22-yarder with 7:03 to play that put the Giants ahead 22-13. New York marched 74 yards in eight minutes after a 36-yard Murray field goal to get the key points.

Brad Maynard grabbed a high center snap and barely got the ball down into position before Daluiso's kick.

Daluiso made an unprecedented four first-half field goals, including 22- and 43-yard efforts in the first quarter and boots of 41 and 51 yards in the second quarter.

The last and longest came in the final seconds of the first half after Daluiso banked it between the goalposts off the right upright.

Danny Kanell's two-yard touchdown pass to Aaron

Pierce with 11:33 to play in the second quarter gave the Giants a 13-0 lead, although television replays seemed to show the ball hit the ground on the play.

Minnesota recovered New York's first punt return fumble of the season to set up the Vikings' only first half points, a 25-yard field goal by Murray with 1:47 to play in the second quarter.

Cunningham was shut down by the Giants defense in the first half, fumbling the ball away twice and throwing an interception to Jason Seborn of the Giants, NFL leaders at forcing turnovers.

The Giants had not been in the playoffs since 1994, when they lost to Minnesota.

The Vikings, in the playoffs for the fifth time in six years, dropped five games in a row before beating Indianapolis in the final game to reach the playoffs.

Minnesota had struggled without quarterback Brad Johnson, lost to a season-ending neck injury, until Cunningham's late heroics.

Thrilling finish expected in Sydney to Hobart race

SYDNEY (AFP) — Hong Kong maxi Exile and the favourite Brindabella fought a duel for line honours Sunday in the Sydney-Hobart yacht race, with the tightest finish in years expected Monday.

By late Sunday, the 66-foot Exile was two nautical miles ahead of her larger competitor in what has become a two-boat race after rough seas and high winds forced several contenders out of the race.

After successfully crossing the treacherous Bass Strait, the two began their charge down the east coast of Tasmania state Sunday, ahead of a sprint up the Derwent River.

The maxi Brindabella is owned and skippered by George Snow, who is desperate to be first across the line after having twice been second.

However, the smaller Exile, skippered by Warwick Miller, has maintained its bandy lead in the race for overall victory on handicap.

In third place was the Sydney 50-footer Ragamuffin which was also strongly placed on the handicap ratings.

A total of 13 yachts have retired from the race and the Swedish maxi Nicorette has rejoined after a stopover to effect running repairs.

Nicorette, which was narrowly beaten by Brindabella in a thrilling tacking duel out of the Sydney heads Friday, had been strongly fancied to be among the first to arrive in Hobart.

The yacht's skipper Ludde Ingvall stayed on land to receive medical treatment for a severe abscess below a tooth.

Record-breaking Kipketer gives Coe a year to forget

PARIS (AFP) — Britain's former dual Olympic 1500 metres champion Sebastian Coe probably thought his year could not get any worse after he lost his seat at the British general election in May. Then along came Wilson Kipketer.

The 24-year-old Kenyan-born Dane, whose name means 'born on the verandah', first equalled Coe's 16-year-old 800 metres world record of 1:41.73 — the longest standing men's track record — and then bettered it twice to set the new mark at 1:41.24.

Kipketer also broke the world indoor record twice in three days on his way to the world title in March, and also retained his outdoor title with consummate ease in Athens in August.

It seems to be only a question of time before he breaks the 1:40 barrier. There does not appear to be a man around to end his unbeaten streak — he was last beaten at the 1995 Grand Prix final.

The other seemingly unbeatable international track star, Haile Gebrselassie, enjoyed himself immensely up to the middle of August, breaking the 5,000 and 10,000 metres world records and, like Kipketer, won a world outdoor title, in his case in the 10,000 metres.

However, the diminutive Ethiopian's participation in the world championships was in doubt right up to the day of his beat as his manager Jos Van Hermen had a running battle with the IAAF, the ruling body of world athletics, over wanting the track watered. Hermen feared that Gebrselassie would suffer badly blistered feet, as he did in Atlanta, and wreck his chances of running in the richly-sponsored meetings after Athens.

It was the Gebrselassie team that eventually backed down and the Ethiopian went on to lose both his records on a miserable night for him in Brussels on August 22.

The Grand Prix meeting in Zurich on August 13 will go down as a unique occasion when two people with the same name broke world records — Wilson Kipketer.

Not even the great 800 metres runner could break two world records in one night and it was the Kenyan 3,000 metres steeplechaser Wilson Boit Kipketer (the bas to use Boit to differentiate between the pair) who took the laurels in that event. Just 11 days later his name was to become a mere footnote as compatriot Bernard Barnasali blasted his record apart taking almost four seconds from it.

The male sprinters failed to sparkle and most of the interest centred on the animosity between American Maurice Greene and the man he displaced as world champion, Donovan Bailey of Canada.

Despite Greene's professed love of God, which prompted Bailey to smile throughout the post 100 metres press conference, the American revealed his true feelings a week later before the 4x100 metres relay world championship heats.

Along with Ato Boldon, Trinidad's 200 metres world champion, and the self styled 'Clown Prince of the track' Jon Drummond — all coached by the former 440 yard record holder John Smith — Greene launched into a blistering personal attack on Bailey.

Revenge was sweet, however, as the bitter Canada-USA rivalry in the relay dissolved in the first round as the

Americans, who Drummond had said would smash the world record in the heats, dropped the baton on the first exchange.

Bailey, who led the Canadians to the relay title, also got into a war of words with the 200 and 400 metres Olympic champion Michael Johnson when they met in a duel for the title of the world's fastest man.

The 30-year-old Bailey accused Johnson of being "a chicken" when the American collapsed with an adductor muscle injury in their 150 metres head-to-head in Toronto. The Canadian later retracted the comment but the animosity it created in America was plain to see in Athens.

Johnson, who was given a wild card entry by the IAAF for the Athens extravaganza, as were all the defending champions, scraped into the final and then won the title.

Algerian Noureddine Morceli and Gebrselassie were involved in the other head-to-head clash of the year at the Hengelo track in the Netherlands and for Morceli it was a foretaste of what was to be a miserable year.

The 27-year-old Morceli, who still holds the 1500 metres, mile and 2000 metres world records, failed to finish the race. He blamed the failure on anaemia. He then got involved in a dispute about what sponsor's kit he would wear in Athens, where he was thrashed by the indoor world champion Hicham El Guerrouj, and lost his brother in a car crash.

The women's season was dominated by 21-year-old American 'wunderkind' Marion Jones, returning after having a screw put in a leg after breaking it twice last year. Jones charmed the world as she took the world 100 metres title from the astonishing Ukrainian Zhanna Pintusevich, who went on to deprive Merlene Ottey of one last gold medal in the 200 metres.

The great Jamaican, who sported dyed golden hair at the championships, provided one of the lasting images of the year strolling back to the 100 metres start like a prowling lioness after she ran for 60 metres having failed to bear the gun recalling the field for a false start — the reality etched on her features that another gold medal was gone.

There was a more joyful climax for another Commonwealth athlete as Australian Cathy Freeman became the first Aborigine to win a world title in the 400 metres but Ireland's Sonia O'Sullivan, who goes out with Freeman's former boyfriend, found that her Atlanta nightmare extended to Athens as she failed to take a medal in either the 5,000 or 10,000 metres.

A tear-stained O'Sullivan had a disastrous championships rounded off as the 1500 metres silver medalist Regina Jacobs insulted her for costing her the gold after the Irish girl grabbed hold of Jacobs' shirt on the final bend. It appeared, though, as if O'Sullivan had to do that to stay on her feet.

Kipketer is never likely to have such problems, simply because he looks leagues ahead of his rivals. It is the thought of what he may do next season, and the next round of the Greene-Bailey rivalry, that will keep athletics buff-warm over the winter break.

Broncos take revenge on Jaguars

DENVER (AFP) — Terrell Davis ran for 184 yards and two touchdowns, sparking Denver past Jacksonville 42-17 here Sunday to avenge a bumbling playoff upset suffered last year to the Jaguars.

The triumph advanced the Broncos to a National Football League semi-final next weekend. Denver will travel to Pittsburgh or Kansas City in the American Football Conference playoffs.

Davis, who missed last week's regular-season finale with a separated shoulder, suffered bruised right ribs on a 59-yard run after staking Denver to a lead.

"I'm a little sore but I'll be all right," he said. "I'll get X-rays and re-evaluate it. I'm not worried about being able to play next week."

Jacksonville appeared ready for another comeback stunner, rallying from a 21-0 deficit to trail by only 21-17 and have the ball at Denver's 16-yard line.

But Jaguar quarterback Mark Brunell fumbled the center snap and Denver linebacker Allen Aldridge recovered. Jacksonville never scored again.

"We were audibling. I was just a little late in getting in there. It was a cadence thing," Brunell said. "Certainly, we had a lot of momentum going our way at that point and the fumble really hurt us. To get some points on that series would've been big. Noise was a factor on that play."

After Davis left the game, Derek Loville ran 11 times for 103 yards and scored on runs of eight and 25 yards in the fourth quarter. Denver's 310 rushing yards were the fifth-most by any team in a playoff game.

"This was not a very good finish," Jaguar coach Tom Coughlin said. "Everyone's very disappointed. We just didn't make any plays."

Only twice before in NFL playoff history had two backs each rushed for 100 yards in a game. Oakland's Hewitt Dixon and Pete Banaszak did it in 1967 and Minnesota's Brent



Denver Broncos' Ray Crockett (R) takes down Jacksonville Jaguar's Keenan McCardell during their AFC wildcard NFL playoff game. The Broncos rushed for over 300 yards to defeat the Jaguars 42-17 (Reuters photo)

McClanahan and Chuck Foreman did it in 1976.

"There were some nice holes out there today," Davis said. "The offensive line just keeps pushing. We wanted to establish the line of scrimmage early in the game and Derek came in later and did a hell of a job."

Davis sandwiched a pair of short touchdown runs around a 43-yard scoring pass from John Elway to Rod Smith, helping Denver build a 21-0 lead with the game only 19 minutes old.

Jacksonville moved within 21-7 at half-time on a two-yard Natron Means touchdown run. Travis Davis blocked a punt and raced 29 yards for a third-quarter touchdown to lift

the Jaguars as close as they came.

"This was not revenge," Denver coach Mike Shanahan said. "We do not use the term revenge. We use the term respect because we have a great deal of respect for the Jaguars. We have a lot of respect for a football team that came into our backyard last year and beat us."

"Our team was ready. We had one of our best weeks of practice. The focus and concentration level was high. This is our first step. Now our mission is to win the next one."

Elway completed 16-of-24 passes for 223 yards and a touchdown without an interception as Denver kept the ball for 40 minutes and

59 seconds, the fifth-highest total in playoff history.

"It was the best I've seen the offensive line play," Elway said. "They dominated the line of scrimmage from the get-go. And it not only helped the running game but the passing game."

Brunell was 18-for-32 for 203 yards, while Devoer held Means to only 40 yards on 10 carries.

"Personally, this is a difficult one in that I think we're a better football team this year than last year," Brunell said. "That's tough. Certainly, we have the talent and the guys that excel at this level. For whatever reason, I don't think we really ever hit our potential this season."

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Poborsky set to join Benfica

LISBON (AFP) — Manchester United misfit Karel Poborsky is set to join Portuguese giants Benfica. The 25-year-old Czech international midfielder flew into Lisbon for talks with Benfica on Saturday and club president Joao Vale e Azevedo said he had signed a contract. Azevedo declined to reveal any other details of the deal but said he expected Poborsky to make his debut for Benfica against league leaders FC Porto next weekend.

Paraguay to play eight friendlies

ASUNCION (AFP) — World Cup qualifiers Paraguay announced Saturday that they will play eight warm-up matches before next year's tournament in France. Paraguay are in Group D along with Spain, Bulgaria and Nigeria. They will play against a Rest of the Americas team on January 22, against the United States in March 14 and Mexico on March 18, Italy on April 22, South Korea on May 2, Belgium on May 22, Holland on May 31 and Romania on June 3.

CSKA player dies of heart attack

MOSCOW (AFP) — Sergei Mamchuk, a defender with Russian first division club CSKA Moscow, collapsed and

died early Saturday morning at his Moscow apartment. A preliminary medical report stated said Mamchuk, a 25-year-old Ukrainian, had died of a sudden heart attack. Mamchuk was born in and started playing football in the Ukrainian city of Dnepropetrovsk. He was the captain of the Soviet Under-18 national team that won the 1990 European championship in Hungary.

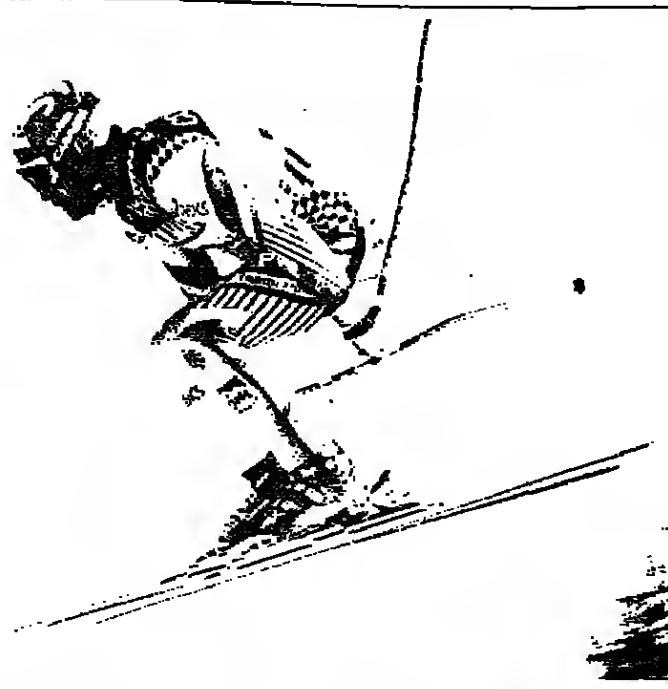
Swimmer dropped after positive test

KIEV (AFP) — Leading Ukraine freestyler Yelena Lapunova will miss the world swimming championships in Perth, Australia, next month after failing a drug test. Ukrainian Swimming Federation president Andrei Vlasov said the sport's international governing body, FINA, had barred Lapunova until after an investigation into her case. Lapunova returned a positive test in November. FINA expected to announce what action will be taken against the swimmer at the beginning of next January.

Hadji to join La Coruna

LISBON (AFP) — Moroccan international midfielder Mustafa Hadji will Sunday complete a transfer from Portuguese club Sporting Lisbon to Spanish side Deportivo La Coruna. Hadji will sign a four-and-a-half year deal with La Coruna, the sports newspaper A Bola reported.

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Austrian skier Hannes Trinkl jumps during the final practice of Men's Downhill race in Bormio December 28. Trinkl clocked the best time of 2:02.62 (Reuters photo)

Americans wary of Australians and Chinese at swimming championships

SYDNEY (AFP) — The United States team are wary of Australia and China in the medal hunt at next month's World Swimming titles in Perth.

The 43-strong American squad, including five Atlanta Olympic individual champions, arrived here Sunday and spoke of the threat posed by the rising Australian team and the record-breaking feats of China's female swimmers.

"Australia is going to be there definitely. It's their home court, so I think Australia are definitely looking very good," said U.S. men's head coach John Urbaneck at Sydney Airport.

"We don't know which team will show up from China and who they're bringing and that might make it interesting for the women," Urbaneck added.

The recent performances by the Chinese women have revived suspicions of possible drug use that surfaced following their domination of the 1994 Rome World Championships where they won 12 of the 16 women's events.

"In 1994, it was very hard because the Chinese were under suspicious circumstances and indeed it seems the same thing has happened just recently, setting a couple of world records from people who have never been in the top 50 in the world before," U.S. women's co-captain, BJ Bedford said.

"So we're definitely up against some really scary competition."

"We expect a lot out of ourselves and we have a lot of pride in our country and representing our country."

The U.S. squad includes quadruple Olympic champion Amy Van Dyken, world 400 metres individual medley record holder Toni Dolan and two other 1996 individual gold medalists in backstrokers Brad Bridgewater and Beth Botsford and freestyler Brooke Bennett.

Bedford rated the U.S. women's team one of the strongest for a long time. "I know a lot of people who have done their best times throughout this season in preparation for this meet," Bedford said. "We're really looking forward to the competition. It's going to be pretty crazy out here in Australia because swimming here is very, very strong."

Urbaneck said the U.S. men's team looked "pretty firm" in many events. However, he felt the Americans' prospects in the distance freestyle events were "questionable" following the withdrawal through injury of their leading 200, 400 and 1500-metre swimmer Chad Karvin.

"Obviously, that's Australia's strength and right now it's probably our weakness looking at this meet, but the rest of the field, I think we're going to be very competitive."

"We have the world record for the 400 IM event, breaststroke looks like it's going to be an outstanding event, sprint events are traditionally good for the U.S., especially the relays, so I think we have our strengths."

The championships begin on January 8.

Rangers down Dundee United

GLASGOW (AFP) — Reigning champions Rangers stretched their lead at the top of the Scottish Premier Division with a 4-1 win over Dundee United as arch-rivals Celtic crashed at St Johnstone on Saturday.

Rangers, chasing a record 10th successive title, came from behind to register an ultimately comfortable victory courtesy of goals from Brian Laudrup, Alex Cleland and two from Italian goal-machine Marco Negri.

Rangers now lead the table by two points after Celtic slumped to a shock defeat at the hands of Premier division newcomers St Johnstone. Hearts moved up to second after an impressive 3-1 victory at Dunfermline.

"We were very slow to start and United looked better than us," admitted Rangers manager Walter Smith. "But we came to life and scored two goals before half-time, which were vital to us. I felt we played very well in the last hour."

Celtic slipped to third in the table and now trail Rangers by four points after they were suok by a 72nd-minute goal by St Johnstone's George O'Boyle.

Alan Preston swung over a corner from the right and O'Boyle got the final touch in a packed goalmouth to stun Celtic's travelling fans.

Celtic coach Wim Jansen said he was bitterly upset by his team's performance.

"I am very disappointed," he said. "We did not play well as a team and didn't play the game we wanted to. St Johnstone were very aggressive and spoiled our

passing game." In the day's other matches, Aberdeen scored a rare win — 3-0 over Motherwell — to move off the bottom of the table. They rose above Hibernian, who lost 1-0 at home to Kilmarnock.

"Fourteen games without a win is just far too long and I feel like I am repeating myself after every single game," said angry Hibs manager Jim Duffy. "We got exactly what we deserved."

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Bulls take lead in Eastern Conference

CHICAGO (AP) — Michael Jordan scored 47 points and Dennis Rodman had 29 rebounds, the most in his 2 seasons with the Bulls, as Chicago defeated the Atlanta Hawks 97-90 Saturday night to take over the lead in the Eastern Conference.

The two-time defending national basketball association champion Bulls have won seven consecutive games while the Hawks have lost five straight, season-long streaks for both teams. Chicago, which now has a half-game lead, trailed Atlanta by four games just last week.

Steve Smith scored 18 points for the Hawks, who played most of the game short-handed in falling to 8-10 since their 11-0 start. • Toronto Raptors 97, New York Knicks 94: In New York, Doug Christie's 3-pointer with eight-tenths of a second remaining gave Toronto its first-ever win over New York.

Damon Stoudamire had a game-high 30 points for the Raptors, who won for only the second time in 14 road games and the fourth time in 28 games all season. Ex-Knicks John Wallace and Christie each had with 18 points.

Allan Houston scored 21 and Larry Johnson had 19 and 11 rebounds for the Knicks, who had their 10-game home court winning streak ended.

• Portland Trail Blazers 102, Utah Jazz 91: In Salt Lake City, Arvydas Sabonis had 25 points and 11 rebounds and Kelvin Cato blocked four shots in the fourth quarter to help Portland snap Utah's eight-game home winning streak.

Portland held Utah to 14 second-quarter points and took control of the game with a 42-8 run en route to a 51-39 halftime lead. The Jazz went just 5-of-15 from the foul line in the first half.

Cato blocked four shots, three by Karl Malone, in the last eight minutes to stop a Jazz rally.

• Orlando Magic 96, Charlotte Hornets 87: In Orlando, Derek Harper scored a season-high 26 points and Orlando ended a five-game losing streak. Rony Seikaly added 25 points and 10 rebounds for the Magic, while Mark

Price contributed 17 points and nine assists.

Glenn Rice led the Hornets with 27 points, but backup centre Matt Geiger was the only other Charlotte player in double figures with a season-high 22 points. He also had nine rebounds before fouling out.

Three baskets by reserve Brian Evans helped the Magic build the lead to 85-70 with 6:18 left in the game. The closest the Hornets got after that was 89-82 on a layup by B.J. Armstrong with 1:23 left. The Magic closed out the victory with 7-of-8 shooting from the free throw line.

• New Jersey Nets 112, Milwaukee Bucks 104, 2 overtime: In East Rutherford, New Jersey, Kendall Gill scored seven of his 25 points in the second overtime and Keith Van Horn had 26 points and 13 rebounds to lead New Jersey over Milwaukee.

With the Nets trailing 99-98 in the second overtime, Gill hit a jumper to put New Jersey ahead for good. Kerry Kittles followed with a pull-up jumper from the key as the shot clock expired.

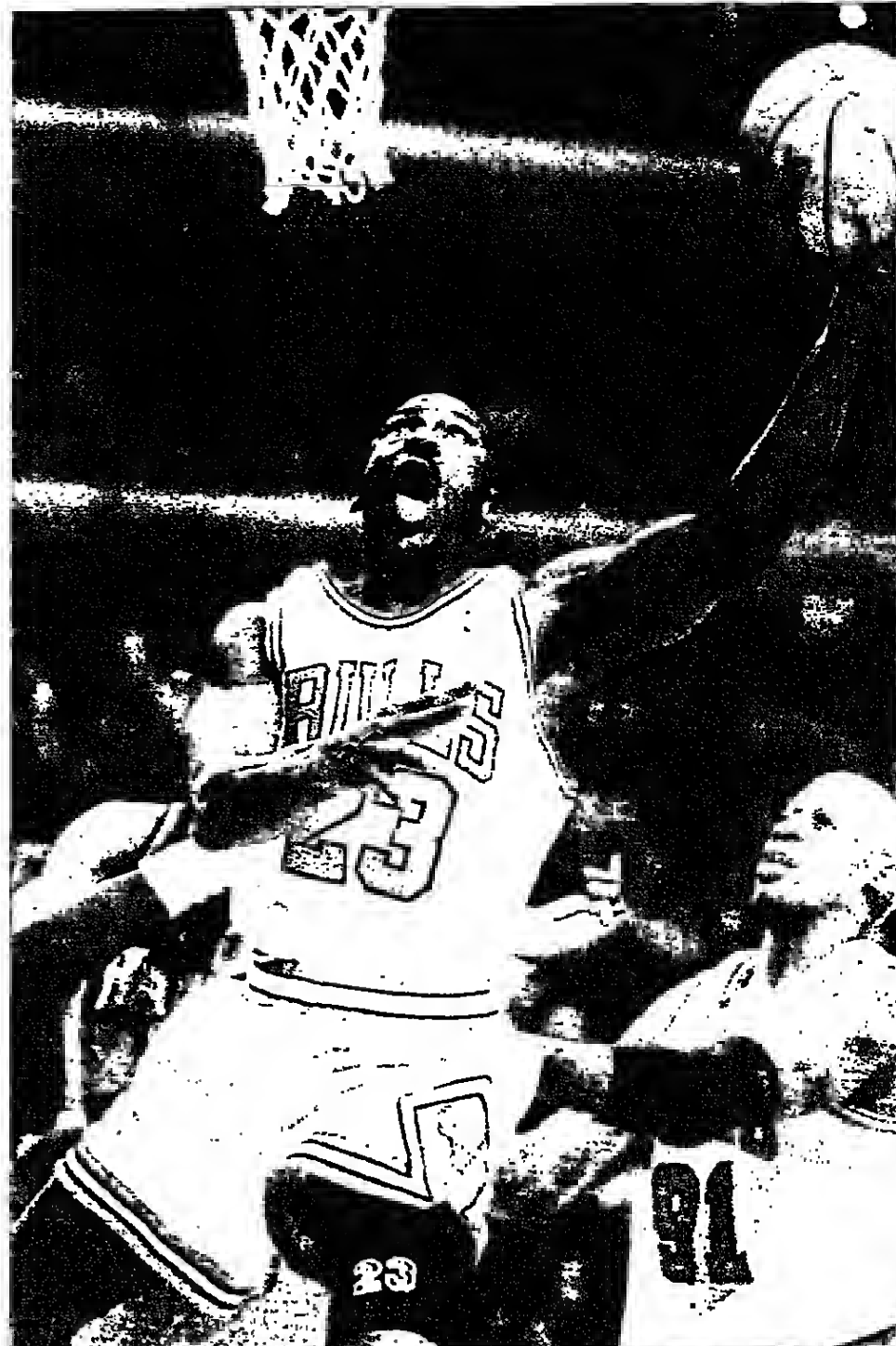
Glenn Robinson, who led all scorers with 29 points, hit a jumper to pull Milwaukee within a point with 2:33 remaining. But Gill made a 3-point basket, then knocked the ball away from Robinson at the other end and was fouled. He made both free throws for a 107-101 edge. Kittles then iced it with a 3-point shot.

• Houston Rockets 111, Washington Wizards 101: In Houston, Brent Price and Mario Elie hit 3-pointers in the final minute as Houston held off a fourth-quarter rally and ended Washington's six-game winning streak.

The Rockets, winning for the first time in four games, got 26 points each from Kevin Willis and Clyde Drexler. Willis and Charles Barkley had 14 rebounds apiece.

It was Washington's first loss to a Western Conference opponent in 10 games this season. The Wizards have not won in Houston in five seasons. Chris Webber led the wizards with 26 points and 11 rebounds.

• Los Angeles Clippers



Chicago Bulls' guard Michael Jordan (23) shoots in front of Atlanta Hawks' center Dikembe Mutombo and teammate Dennis Rodman (R) during the first quarter of action in Chicago (Reuters photo)

105, Denver Nuggets 103: In Los Angeles, Rodney Rogers scored 29 points and Lorenzen Wright scored three of his 15 points in the final 34 seconds as the Los Angeles Clippers rallied for a 105-103 victory over the Denver Nuggets on Saturday night.

Brent Barry scored 22 points and Wright added 13 rebounds for the Clippers, who rallied from a 10-point deficit in the final period to end a four-game losing streak and send Denver to its 10th consecutive defeat.

Laphonso Ellis scored

20 points for the Nuggets, whose 0-15 start on the road is the worst in club history. They have won only one of their last 30 games away from McNichols arena, with the lone victory coming in their 1996-97 season finale at Dallas.

• Philadelphia 76ers 85, Golden State Warriors 78: In Oakland, California, Derrick Coleman scored nine of his 22 points in the fourth quarter as Philadelphia broke its six-game losing streak and deprived the Warriors of their first three-game winning streak of the season.

Golden State also had its five-game home winning streak snapped.

The Warriors gave it one last run with a frantic 10-1 spur over the next two minutes led by Donyell Marshall, whose 3-pointer with 2:34 left cut the lead to 75-74.

But after Coles stole the ball on Philadelphia's next possession, he fumbled it away on the fast break while driving for what would have been a go-ahead basket. The warriors never recovered and were outscored 10-4 in the final two minutes.

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 2. Tender No. (6/97) Office Equipment (one LOT).
 3. Tender No. (9/97) Computer Lab (one LOT).
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 - b. The Tender Documents can be purchased by an authorised representative upon submission of an official request.
 - c. The latest date for submission of inquiries pertinent to the Tender is 17/2/1998.
 - d. Bids shall be deposited in the BID BOX at the Furniture & Equipment Division/MOE, or by Mail, not later than 11:00 a.m. (local time) on March 4th, 1998.
 - e. The bids shall be opened on March 4th, 1998 at 15:00 p.m. (local time).
- Chairman**
of Special Tenders Committee

Invitation for Pre-qualification of Consultants for Supervision of Construction of the Integrated Development Project of the Southern Ghors

The Government of Jordan had the final designs and tender documents prepared for the works listed below. It has also secured the finance for the construction and supervision of these works. The three Dams listed are to be constructed of Roller Compacted Concrete (RCC) with properties as described:-

- Wala Dam, 49m high, 300m long, 9.3 MCM storage capacity, with an estimated rolled crete volume 185,000m³.
 - Mujib Dam, 62m high, 600m long, 35 MCM storage capacity, with an estimated rolled crete volume 750,000 m³.
 - Tannur Dam, 69m high, 240m long, 16.8 MCM storage capacity, with an estimated rolled crete volume 260,000m³.
 - Diversion weir at Mujib, with a 1.3kms long tunnel, the southern conveyor 73.5km, northern conveyor 28km long, and irrigation infrastructure for 11,862 dunums.
- The services will include site supervision and general contract administration during construction and maintenance period, including necessary reporting and preparation of project Manuals, with a prior phase to review the design and tender documents It is anticipated that the services will be divided into four separate contracts:-

1. Supervision of construction for Wala and Tannur Dams
2. Supervision of construction for Mujib Dam
3. Supervision of construction for Mujib Weir and Conveyors
4. Supervision of construction for Irrigation Infrastructure

International Consultants with experience in the design and/or supervision of RCC dams are invited to submit pre-qualifications applications for the above contracts 1 and 2, and those with experience in similar works to apply for qualification for the other two contracts.

International consultants are required to joint venture with Jordanian consulting firms classified under class A or B in the fields of water supply, sewerage, roads, and electromechanical engineering. The International Consultants interested to participate in pre-qualification for the above projects are invited to collect the pre-qualification documents in accordance with the following terms.

1. Members of each joint venture are requested to provide with their pre-qualifications documents, a letter of intention duly signed by all members stating that the joint venture is committed to submit a duly legalised agreement, on award and before contract signature.
2. All given information must be correct and accurate.
3. The International Consultants shall comply with the Law of the Jordanian Engineering Association regarding registration.
4. The deadline set for the collection of pre-qualification documents shall be at 13:00 Jordanian local time on January 10, 1998.
5. The Pre-qualification proposals shall be submitted to the Jordan Valley Authority (Address below) no later than 13:00 local time on February 7th 1998, and must include on the envelope "Subject" Pre-qualification of Consultants for Supervision of Construction of the Integrated Development Project of the Southern Ghors.

Address
Dr. Dureid Mahasneh
Head of the Special Committee for the Mujib and Southern Ghors Project
Amman P.O. Box 2769 - Jordan
Fax: 962 - 6 - 689916
Tel.: 962 - 6 - 689400

Dr. Dureid Mahasneh
Secretary General
Jordan Valley Authority

Health ministry ban on female circumcision upheld in Egypt

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt's State Council, in a blow to Islamist groups, on Sunday upheld a health ministry ban on female circumcision.

The State Council, the country's highest administrative body, threw out a verdict issued on June 24 by an administrative court in Cairo overturning the health ministry ban on female circumcision.

In a statement, the State Council ruled that "henceforth, it is illegal for anyone to carry out circumcision operations, even if the girl or her parents agree to it."

The court said that female circumcision would only be allowed in cases of "medical necessity" and a certificate would have to be produced in such cases from the gynaecological department of a hospital.

Violators could face up to three years in prison.

At the health ministry, First Under-Secretary of State Taha Al Khathi welcomed the decision, saying "the ministry now plans to launch the first wide-scale campaign against circumcision." The court decision said "circumcision of girls is not an individual right

under Sharia [Islamic law] because there is nothing in the Koran which authorises it and nothing in the Sunna," the sayings and traditions of the Prophet Muhammad.

"Circumcision thus falls under penal codes forbidding operations on the human body except when medically necessary," the court said.

In June, the lower court overruled a July 1996 decree by Health Minister Ismail Sallam banning the age-old practice of removing all or part of the clitoris and sometimes the labia to quell a woman's sexual desire.

The lower court, acting under pressure from Islamists, accused Mr. Sallam of abuse of power by banning female circumcision in private and public hospitals.

The health minister, however, maintained his decree and appealed to the top administrative court.

According to official estimates, more than 90 per cent of Egyptian girls are circumcised and more than 70 per cent of the operations are carried out at home in

unsanitary conditions, often leading to girls bleeding to death.

An Islamist proponent of female circumcision, Sheikh Youssef Al Badri, told reporters that Sunday's State Council ruling was "not the end of the world."

"The judge is a human being who can make correct or incorrect decisions according to the case," said the retired teacher. "I have not yet decided how to respond but I will continue to work through the judiciary."

During the State Council proceedings, Sheikh Badri told the court he had found "three new 'hadiths' [facts and words of the Prophet Muhammad] proving that Muhammad 'authorised' female circumcision."

"I urge you, for the love of God, not to leave Islam to the mercy of those who want to make licit or illicit, as they wish, principles which have been in place for 14 centuries," Sheikh Badri told the court.

However, the highest Sunni Muslim authority, Sheikh Mohammad Sayed Tantawi of Al Azhar, said last month that he opposed

the practice and that his own daughter had not been circumcised.

"The 'ulemas' [theologians] of Islam are unanimous in agreeing that female circumcision has nothing to do with religion," he said.

An Egyptian surgeon was sentenced to one year in prison earlier this month after a 14-year-old girl died after a circumcision operation.

The doctor, Rabih Ibrahim Mahjoub, 32, was convicted by a court in Qaliyub, 20 kilometres north of Cairo, of "gross negligence and wrongful death."

A member of the information centre on circumcision and violence against women, Siham Abdessalam, called Sunday's court decision "a victory for the enlightened element over the conservative element" in Egyptian society.

But a lawyer for advocates of circumcision said the decision would only help propagate the practice. "We want to tell people: the Prophet did not forbid circumcision and Muslims must not forbid it," said Ahmad Al Khuli.



END OF YEAR CARNIVAL: Young masqueraders dance during a carnival, in San Jose Saturday. More than 100 floats and 30 masqueraders participated in the traditional end of year carnival (Reuters photo)

Iran says it is 'natural' to seek better ties with U.S.

ATHENS (AFP) — Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi said it was "natural" that Tehran should seek better relations with Washington but warned that U.S. policy must change before official dialogue can resume, in an interview published here Saturday.

"The American people is a great people, with a great civilisation, and it is natural that the Iranian president should express his respect and wish to have dialogue with it," Mr. Kharazi told the leftist daily

Eleftherotipia. But he ruled out any talks between Tehran and Washington "until the United States changes its attitude" towards Iran.

He said U.S. policy is based on "the intention of subjecting" Iran by trying to stand in the way of economic development in the region and encouraging Israeli-Turkish military cooperation.

Earlier this month Iran's moderate President Mohammad Khatami hailed

the "great American people" and said he hoped to address a message to them shortly, in the warmest words towards the U.S. by an Iranian leader since they broke ties after the 1979 Islamist revolution in Iran.

Mr. Kharazi also said in the Greek interview that Iran hopes to start official dialogue with other "ancient civilisations" like Greece, Italy and Egypt. Athens and Rome have already welcomed the idea, while Cairo is yet to be sounded out, he said.

Iran condemns Turkish-Israeli-U.S. military exercises

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran slammed Turkey on Sunday for insisting to conduct joint naval exercises with Israel and the United States in the eastern Mediterranean next month and warned it could not remain indifferent.

"Iran has repeatedly voiced its deep concern and regret over the expansion of Israeli influence on the soils of its neighbours," said foreign ministry spokesman Mahmoud Mohammadi.

"Islamic leaders during their summit in Tehran warned of the threats posed by the Zionist regime in the region and asked Turkey to reconsider military ties with Israel," he added.

"We ask Turkey to pay serious attention to the interests of the Islamic world. The Zionist regime's main goal from such ties with Turkey is to divide it from other Muslim countries," the spokesman said.

"Boosting military cooperation and the joint manoeuvre will lead to insecurity in the region, a goal pursued by Israel and the United States," he warned. "The Islamic Republic can not remain indifferent towards such developments."

January's naval manoeuvres have also angered the Arab world. An Arab League spokesman said Friday: "These manoeuvres have no goal but to strengthen the Israeli army and increase tension and fan disturbances in the region."

Turkey and Israel insist the manoeuvres are not targeted against any other country, but they have twice postponed them and only announced the current plans on Dec. 11.

The Reliant Mermaid joint exercise is due to be held in territorial waters and international airspace Jan. 5-9, in accordance with a military cooperation accord signed by Turkey and Israel in February 1996.

Egyptian artists visit Iraq to show solidarity

BAGHDAD (R) — A group of Egyptians including several artists arrived in Baghdad Sunday to express solidarity with Iraqis suffering from stringent U.N. sanctions.

"We are here for the sake of Iraqi children... We want to see what is happening here," Egyptian actress Raghdia told reporters shortly after arriving at Rasheed Hotel in Baghdad.

The group, including acclaimed director Youssef Shahine who won a special prize at this year's Cannes film festival for his life's work, travelled to Baghdad by car from the Jordanian capital Amman.

"We are carrying the signatures of one million Egyptians who expressed their support

for Iraq," Mr. Shahine said. Raghdia, who is of Syrian origin, said the group would visit hospitals and civilian sites which were bombed during the 1991 Gulf war over Kuwait.

The delegation brought some 2.5 tonnes of medicine and gifts for Iraqi children.

Egypt stood against Iraq in the U.S.-led Gulf war which drove Iraqi troops out of Kuwait, prompting Baghdad to cut diplomatic ties with Cairo.

Economic ties between the two Arab countries have improved since Iraq agreed last year with the United Nations an oil-for-food deal allowing it to sell \$2 billion worth of oil over six months to

buy food and medicine for Iraqis suffering from U.N. sanctions imposed for Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Egypt has been supplying Iraq with foodstuffs and medicine under the deal.

More than two million Egyptians worked in Iraq before the Kuwait crisis. In 1993, Egypt sent a senior diplomat to Baghdad to improve services for about 70,000 Egyptians who remained.

Flights to and from Iraq are banned under the sanctions, but the U.N. allowed two planes, one from Russia and the other from Iceland, to land in Iraq in the past week bringing food and medicine for Iraqi children.

Turkish president seeks right to dissolve parliament

ANKARA (AFP) — Aides to Turkish President Suleiman Demirel are working on a constitutional amendment under which the head of state would have larger powers, including the right to dissolve parliament, press reports said Sunday.

Mr. Demirel is preparing to open a public debate on the proposed changes in the next few months, the liberal Istanbul daily Milliyet said, quoting sources close to the president.

To take effect, the constitutional amendment must be supported by a two-thirds majority in the 550-seat parliament.

Turkey's inconclusive general elections in December 1995 and an ensuing political crisis, including a power struggle between a powerful Islamist party and the country's pro-secular army generals, have prompted Mr. Demirel to seek larger executive powers, Milliyet said.

The Islamist Welfare Party, led by former Premier Necmettin Erbakan, emerged as the largest political group in parliament after winning 21 per cent of the vote in the last elections.

Mr. Erbakan and a conservative party set up a coalition government in the summer of 1996, but this cabinet had to step down in June following major rifts with the military

over creeping Islamisation in the country.

The constitutional court, Turkey's highest judicial body, has since May been conducting hearings into Welfare, which is accused of trying to overthrow the secular regime.

The court is expected to announce its verdict in the next few days, and many political analysts expect a ban on the Islamist party.

Mr. Erbakan was replaced by conservative Mesut Yilmaz, who in late June set up a three-party secular coalition.

But this government lacks a ruling majority in parliament and is strongly dependent on the backing of a left-wing group, the Republican People's Party, that has been supporting it conditionally.

Mr. Demirel, at a press conference on Saturday to evalu-

ate 1997 developments in Turkey, complained that the country's current political system had led to the creation of weak coalition governments.

Mr. Demirel believes that a constitutional right for the president to dissolve parliament at times of political crisis would improve stability in the country, Milliyet said.

If the constitutional amendments are approved, presidential elections would be held once in four years, together with the legislative vote. Currently, the president is elected for a seven-year term.

Mr. Demirel also proposes that the president be elected by the direct popular vote rather than by parliament.

Mr. Demirel was elected president by parliament in 1993, and his term is due to end in 2000.



Yoko Ono unburies hatchet against McCartney

LONDON (AFP) — John Lennon's former companion Yoko Ono reopens hostilities against Paul McCartney in a BBC television programme to be aired next month. In the programme "The Ballad of Yoko and John," she dismisses McCartney's claim to have been the creative force behind the Beatles, saying he only made telephone calls to ensure the other members of the group would be at recording sessions. "John did not make the phone calls. He was not on that level as a leader. He was on the level of a spiritual leader. He was the visionary and that is why the Beatles happened."

Students fry worms as 'alternative food sources'

BUTLER (AP) — The school cafeteria was never like this. Students in Ray Greco's 11th-grade science class fried worms, coated them with chocolate, closed their eyes and swallowed them last week as part of an experiment in alternative food sources. "I did it cause it was cool," Knoch High School student Josh Murdoch said. "It's really not that bad." The day may come when humans need to eat worms to survive because of food shortages, Greco said. "With the continuing overpopulation of the world, there are bound to be adjustments in behaviour. Part of that can mean adjusting food sources and what we eat."

Rees-Jones revelations will rock British royals

TUNIS (AFP) — Trevor Rees-Jones, the former bodyguard of the late Diana, Princess of Wales, will make revelations which will rock the British royal family, Tunisian astrologer Hassan Charni predicted. Rees-Jones, the sole survivor of the crash, has so far failed to remember any details of the accident. "These revelations will... throw light... on aspects of Princess Diana's private life during the final weeks before her death," Charni told AFP. The Tunisian soothsayer said he had previously predicted the death of Diana through a poem in old French drawn from the prophecies of Nostradamus dating back to 1555.

Frenchman invents new hygienic toilet

DUNKIRK (AFP) — A Frenchman's mission to ensure better hygiene among restaurant staff has inspired him to invent a toilet which locks users inside unless they wash their hands. People are trapped within until they put their hands under the sink taps for at least 10 seconds in the "Ten plus" toilet, designed by Jacques Roboy, a Dunkirk tiler. He set out constructing a hygienic water closet after seeing a television report which revealed that a dish of peanuts put out by staff in a Paris bar contained traces of urine from various individuals.

Politician claims big ears an asset

MANILA (AFP) — Philippine politician Jose de Venecia says his big ears will serve him in good stead when he runs for president next year. "If you have big ears you can better hear the complaints of the Filipino people," the newspapers quoted the congressional leader as telling residents of a Manila slum during a Christmas visit. "They should take heed. Old folks say people with big ears live longer," he added. Newspapers are fond of ridiculing the politician's elephantine ears, with one satirical daily portraying him as a twin of an outer space character in the film "Star Wars."

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